

SKAZKI

TALES AND LEGENDS OF OLD RUSSIA







Elisabeth Breckinridge - 1928

SKAZKI



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SKAZKI

TALES AND LEGENDS
OF OLD RUSSIA

Told by

IDA ZEITLIN

Illustrated by

THEODORE NADEJEN



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FOREWORD

To be introduced to Russian folklore, not through the easily assimilating senses of childhood, but in bulk, after maturity, is to receive a bewildering impression of light and color. Later, the light and color dispose themselves so as to reveal the beautiful patterns of the fabric, but the effect on that first radiance is only to deepen and intensify it, for the world of the *skazka* is as richly glowing a product of the soil as any country has evolved.

The word *skazka* may be translated by *tale*, though it does not correspond exactly, for it refers only to that particular kind of wonder-tale that is representative of the national folklore. Like all Russian literature, the *skazka* in its written form developed late. One collection of legends appeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century, ascribed to Kirsha Danilov, a name shrouded in mystery except for this single moment of emergence. But the first work of importance in the field was accomplished by A. N. Afanasiev, whose achievement is comparable to that of the brothers Grimm in Germany. While he was still a student at the University, he went about during his summer holidays gathering these tales from the lips of peasants or their descendants, and from written transcripts. Word of his enterprise spread abroad,

and from all quarters stories began to flow in to him. He sifted, arranged, edited, and in 1855 the first edition was published, preserving the narrative style, the traditional speech and the rhythmic formulas of the early bards.

Now, for the first time, the creation of the Russian people was revealed to the gaze of literate Russia in all its childish naïveté, its fantastic imagery, its deep folk wisdom, its warm love of nature, and particularly of animals. For in the folklore of no other country do animals play a more important and intimate rôle. Mishka the Bear is the dear familiar of every Russian child. The little barking dog, who acts as courier between Vladimir the Prince and his captive daughter, is the peasant's friend and therefore introduced naturally as friend to the prince. *The Sleeping Tsarevna*, parallel in so many respects but not in this one to Grimm's *Schneewittchen*, is guarded by a faithful hound even unto death. Frisking colts and friendly wolves and every manner of beast, strange and familiar, give the stories a warmth and humor peculiarly their own.

Russia's wonderland, like that of every country, has its purely racial conceptions—the little hut on chickens' legs that lies deep in the woods and turns without ceasing; Baba Yaga, the traditional witch, sometimes benevolent, more often not, whose mode of travel is by mortar instead of broomstick, but who uses the broom to sweep from behind her the traces of her flight; Kostchei the Deathless, symbol of supernatural evil; the gray

wolf that companions the Tsarevitch in search of adventure and the Tsarevna in the toils of her enemy; the bird of fire, fabulous and beautiful, its smallest feather coveted by the mightiest of Tsars. And it is marked as well by illuminating evidence of the peasant's habit of thought and expression. The ever-present icon and the invocations to God bear witness to the vitality of at least the forms of his religion; the shrewdness of his wisdom is apparent in such aphorisms as, "The folly of him that would dispute with a monarch is greater than any other folly," "Satan himself is silent when an angry woman rages," "Well they knew the vanity of reasoning with woman"; and his genius for language in certain characteristic locutions, of whose effectiveness he must have been well aware, since they appear and reappear in endless variations: "The morning is wiser than the evening," "Whether the journey was little or long, the tale is soon told but the deed slowly done," "Such loneliness as can be told only in a tale," "The days vanished as if water had washed them away."

The stories in the present volume are drawn from a variety of sources—Afanasiev, Pushkin, Zhukovsky. *Sadkó* is a typical legend of the free city of Nóvgorod in its prime, *Kyrilo the Tanner* is a legend of Kiev. While every effort has been made to retain the spirit of the originals, there has been no attempt at exact translation, which would have defeated rather than served the purpose. An impasse is reached even before titles are disposed of. The literal translation of the

title given here as *The Sleeping Tsarevna and the Seven Giants* is *The Dead Tsarevna and the Seven Bogatirs*. A *bogatir* is a creation that has no English counterpart; he is neither giant, hero nor knight but a Russian combination of all three.

In this connection a special word should be said of the Pushkin poems. To any lover of Pushkin's verse the idea of translation is absurd, so inseparably are its beauties woven into the very texture of the language. It is with this nonconformity in mind that the English versions have been made. The flavor has been preserved as far as possible. The words have been used, discarded or elaborated as the occasion seemed to demand. Three of his tales—*Tsar Saltan*, *The Sleeping Tsarevna and the Seven Giants* and *The Golden Cock*—are based on pure folklore imparted to Pushkin by his old nurse during his exile from St. Petersburg. The fourth, *Ruslán and Lyudmila*, his first work of importance, finished at twenty, is a poetic romance, amorous and fantastic. Only such portions of it have been used (and modified) as lend themselves to the kind of treatment pursued with the other stories in the volume. The prologue is Pushkin's prologue to *Ruslán and Lyudmila*.

The preparation of this text was made possible through the collaboration of Mr. Theodore Nadejen, who provided the material from which the final version was written, and I gratefully acknowledge here his share in the work.

IDA ZEITLIN.

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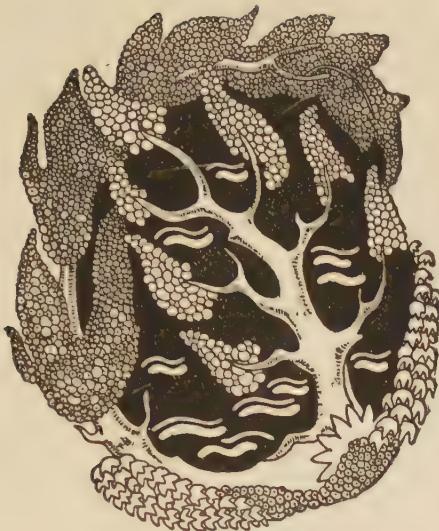
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PROLOGUE

There is a halcyon sea, and from its untroubled waters silver mists rise.

*And a gnarled oak grows on the shore,
and a learned cat that is chained with a chain
of gold walks forward and back. And he
sings as he goes to the right, and as he goes to
the left he tells strange tales of enchantment.*

*And the place is a place of wonders. For
a wood sprite strays in the thicket, and out of
the branches a wood nymph laughs, and un-
known paths bear the footprints of unknown
beasts.*

*And a little hut upon chickens' legs turns
round and round, and the hut is blind, hav-*

*ing neither casement nor door. And over
the hills and the valleys phantom shapes
gather.*

*And the dawn breaks, and the waters come
up and flood all the desolate sands, and out
of the deep rise thirty goodly knights, full
panoplied, and with them the ancient sea-
king that is their sire.*

*And a young Tsarevitch plunges his
sword into the heart of his enemy, but the
eyes of the people are fixed on the clouds,
where over the waves and over the forest a
wizard bears captive a struggling giant. In
a lonely tower a maiden weeps, and a gray
wolf is her faithful servitor. And here the
mortar of Baba Yaga wanders whither it
will, and yonder Kostchei the Deathless
gloats above his shining hoards of gold.*

*And the breath of Russia lies sweet, and
sweet over all the place broods the soul of
Russia.*

*I have been there beside the halcyon sea,
and underneath the oak quaffed golden
mead, and heard the strange tales of the
learned cat.*

And so I tell them to you.

KYRILO THE TANNER



KYRILo THE TANNER

IN the glorious city of Kiev, more years ago than the hairs of thy head, Vladímir the Prince ruled on his throne, and for his golden heart was named Little Brother to the Sun. And he had one daughter, so beautiful and kind that, to him upon whom her glance fell, it was as though he had received a silver ruble.

And the years followed swiftly one upon the other, until an evil chance befell Vladímir the Prince and the city of Kiev. From a deep cavern in the mountainside, beyond the

city walls, a devouring dragon came forth upon the highways, and his nostrils belched black columns of smoke and his eyes spat venom and tongues of flame issued from his mouth. And he stretched himself before the city gate so that none, either afoot or on horse, might enter or go forth, and he called for the flesh of a maiden to gorge his hunger. And the lamentations of the people rose toward heaven, and the knights of Vladímir the Prince buckled on their armor and did battle with the monster. Yet to none was the victory given, but the earth was strewn with the bodies of the slain.

And at length the lots were cast and a maiden went forth to the city gate, and the dragon seized her and bore her to his cavern, and peace descended upon the people of Kiev but terror dwelt in their hearts. And in the fulness of time the dragon again issued forth from his cavern and called for the flesh of a maiden to gorge his hunger, and again the lots were cast and a maiden went forth. And whether the lot fell upon peasant or noble, upon soldier or merchant, he must needs yield his daughter up to the jaws of the dragon, and many maidens went forth to his summons but none returned. And all the

people of Kiev were bound together in the bitter brotherhood of sorrow.

And so it came to pass that the lot fell upon the palace of Vladímir the Prince. And he cried: "I will not suffer thee to go, my daughter. But I myself will battle with the dragon and slay him, or perish at his hands."

But the maiden answered: "Nay, little father, this may not be, but where the hazard falls, there let it lie. Be of good cheer. Who knows but that this monster will have compassion on me and spare my life?"

And she bade farewell to Vladímir the Prince, and went forth alone to the city gate where the dragon awaited her coming. Yet she could not choose but weep, and the sound of wailing arose from the streets and walls of the city and Vladímir the Prince walked apart and knew himself not for suffering. But the dragon heeded naught, and seized the maiden in his arms and bore her away to his foul cavern in the mountainside.

And when he looked upon her, he saw that her beauty was such that it cannot be dreamed or pictured but only told in a tale, and he grew faint with love of her and embraced her, saying: "Thou art too fair to

perish, little dove. Thou shalt abide with me and keep my house. Thou shalt feed my hunger and slake my thirst and comfort my weariness. And I will bring thee bright jewels from the bowels of the mountains, and soft raiment from the marts of the East. And I will guard thee as I guard mine eyes."

And each morning ere the dragon departed to spread havoc over all the land, he plucked huge trees from out of the earth and tore great boulders from the mountainside, and rolled them before the mouth of the cavern to be his sentinels. And when he returned at nightfall, he removed them and entered in, and ate of the food which the Princess had made ready and lay down at her feet and slept.

And it chanced one day that the Princess sat alone, and meditated upon the bright city of Kiev and upon the palace of Vladímir the Prince, and she heard a sound as of the barking of an animal, and through the crevices between the branches and the boulders that sealed the cavern's mouth, her little dog came creeping. And when he beheld the face of his mistress, he leaped upon her and barked without let or pause, and would not



*And she bade farewell to Vladimir the
Prince, and went forth to the city
gate where the dragon awaited her
coming.*

be quieted. And she fondled him in her bosom and her tears bedewed his head.

And presently she bethought herself, and took a charred twig and wrote therewith on a fragment of white birch-bark, and with a golden hair from her head she bound the birch-bark to the neck of her little dog. And pointing the way toward the palace of Vladímir the Prince, she whispered in his ear: "Be thou my courier, little friend, to bear these tidings to the Prince, my father, and ease his heart that is bowed down with care. And bring me in return some word of comfort for the dark hours of my captivity."

And the little dog did not cease from barking, but went forth from the cavern and ran to the palace of Vladímir the Prince. And the Prince saw the fragment of white birch-bark bound with the hair of his daughter, and read thereon the words:

"Little father, I am in life and health, but the dragon holds me captive. Jewels from the heart of the mountain hath he laid at my feet and treasures from the deeps of the sea. Yet to live with a dragon is to live with sorrow. May God have thee in his keeping."

And the Prince wept with joy that his

daughter lived, and with sorrow that the dragon held her captive. And he bound a letter to the neck of the little dog, and wrote therein:

“Be of good courage, my belovèd child, and with God’s help I will deliver thee.”

And the little dog returned to the cavern, and crept through the crevices between the branches and the boulders that sealed its mouth, and when the Princess read the words of her father her spirit was at peace. And so each day the little dog went to and fro as a courier between the palace and the cavern. And the prince pondered upon his daughter’s plight, and sought how she might be delivered from the bonds of the dragon.

And after many days of deep thought, he wrote to her, saying:

“Thou must try if thou canst win from the dragon by thy woman’s wit the name of him whose strength will prevail against his strength.”

And when the dragon returned at night-fall the Princess placed rich food before him and sweet wines, and when he had eaten and drunk she played to him upon a harp of gold and he laid his head in her lap and was content.

And she smiled softly upon him and caressed him with her white hands and said: "Thou art dauntless of heart, my friend, and mighty of sinew, and there is none can name himself thy peer. Yet dost thou walk in constant peril at the hands of thine enemies, and my heart is fearful lest harm befall thee. For if thou shouldst be slain, what cruel fate were mine!"

And the dragon, listening, smiled an evil smile and answered: "Be not fearful, little dove, for there is no arm so strong that it will crush me nor no sword so keen that it will pierce me through. These are but idle fancies, fit for a beldame's mumbling."

"In truth, my lord, I know not what they be, but only that they weigh upon my soul and rob me of my peace. Tell me, I pray thee, is there no man in all the world to match thee, arm for arm and strength for strength?"

And the brow of the dragon darkened in wrath and he cried: "What are these things to thee? Nay, if it please thee, question till the dawn. Thou shalt learn naught of me."

"Thou dost not well to chide me, my beloved, nor to conceal from me thy secret thoughts. I prithee, speak, and ease me of

my burden. Is there in all the world no man to challenge thee?"

And she clasped her white arms about his neck and entreated him so piteously, that all his strength forsook him and he yielded to her will.

"In all the world there is one man who is my single peer. His strength is as the strength of ten, for he walks in the light of God. Still have I naught to fear from him, for he is a simple man and knoweth not the might of his right arm. Yet if it came to pass that I should seize his daughter, then it might be that he would learn his strength and rend me limb from limb. He dwells within the walls of Kiev and his name is called Kyrilo, tanner of hides. And now, enough of these things. I have flown today from the snow-crowned peaks of the North to the fair valleys of Arabia. I have seen strange sights and wrought strange deeds, and I am spent with weariness. Play thou upon thy golden harp, and I will sleep."

And in the morning the dragon bade the Princess farewell, and plucked huge trees from out of the earth and tore great boulders from the mountainside, and rolled them before the mouth of the cavern to be his sen-

tinels. And presently the little dog crept through the crevices between the branches and the boulders, and the Princess bound to his neck a letter, wherein she had written:

“Seek out Kyrilo the peasant, the tanner of hides, who dwells within the walls of the city of Kiev, for he only shall prevail against the dragon.”

And so the little dog ran to the palace, barking all the way, and the Prince read what his daughter had written and his joy knew no bounds. And he dispatched couriers to every corner of the city to find out the house of Kyrilo the Tanner, and he ordered his coach to be brought, that he might be borne to the house of Kyrilo, and do honor to him that was appointed of God to slay the dragon.

And Kyrilo stood at a huge vat, wherein he plunged at once the skins of a hundred bulls, and when he saw that the Prince approached him and smiled upon him as upon his friend, his great hands trembled and the hundred skins were rent in twain as though they had been wafers.

And the Prince said: “I greet thee, Kyrilo the Tanner, appointed of God to slay the

dragon that lays siege to our city and destroys our children. And I pray that thou go forth against him as speedily as may be, to rid us of his presence and to deliver the Princess, my daughter, from captivity.”

But Kyrilo gazed in dismay upon the Prince and answered: “Thou art deceived, my lord. I am a peasant and a tanner of hides. I ply my craft from dawn to dark, and have no skill in aught that lies beyond. How should I strive against this monster? I would not anger thee, but fight I cannot!”

“Nay, thou must venture, Tanner, for only thou canst win the victory. The dragon hath declared it.”

But Kyrilo would not, and still he shook his head and made reply: “Thy pardon, Prince. My task is to tan hides. I cannot fight.”

And at length the Prince in sore distress left the house of Kyrilo, and returned to the palace and gathered his knights and his councillors about him and said: “The head of this peasant is as thick as his arm is mighty. How should he be moved to this combat?”

And the oldest and sagest of the councillors arose and spoke.



"Pity us, Father Kyrilo, pity us!"

"Sire, if thou think it good, send to the tanner five thousand young maids of the city of Kiev; let them go from the hut of the peasant and from the palace of the noble, and let them kneel before him and plead with him, for the sake of their lives that are doomed, to do battle with the dragon. Though his head be thick, yet his heart is gentle, and it may be that he will heed their prayers."

And the children went forth from hut and palace to the house of Kyrilo the Tanner, and they knelt before him and cried:

"Pity us, Father Kyrilo, pity us! Go forth against the dragon and vanquish him! Else will he devour us each one in turn, while yet the sweets of life remain untried. Go forth and slay him, Father Kyrilo! Thou art our saviour and our hope. We will not leave thee, but kneel here at thy feet till thou hast pledged thy word to fight the dragon."

And they clasped their hands and wept, and the youngest wept more bitterly than all the rest.

And in the end Kyrilo yielded to their prayers and said: "Go with the Lord and weep no more, for your tears afflict my soul. I will do battle with the dragon and slay him

by God's grace, or stick in his throat till he perish for lack of breath."

And so he prepared to go forth and meet the dragon. And he called for hemp to the measure of three hundred *poods*, where-with he fashioned a stout rope and bound it about his body. And with his knife he hewed a great tree down and took it for a cudgel in his hand. And so he went to the cavern in the mountainside.

And he lifted his voice and summoned the dragon from his hiding-place, crying: "Come forth, vile monster and skulker in the dark! It is Kyrilo the Tanner who calls. Come forth and match thyself against me, arm for arm and strength for strength!"

And the dragon hissed and snorted and gnashed his teeth in fury, crying: "What midge is this that buzzes in the field? Do thou but bide my coming, and I will bolt thee at a single gulp!"

"Then tarry not, but come! Here is the open field, fit meeting ground for warriors, and here an enemy who summons thee to combat. Wilt thou come forth, or is thy spirit faint as thy soul is cursed?"

"Thou braggart fool, thine hour is near at hand. I will seize thee by thy yellow hair,

and thy soul shall swoon for terror and thy bones rattle in their sockets! I will dash thee into fragments against the mountain-side and leave no remnant save a single hair, whereby thy mother may know thee for her son."

"All things by the will of God, and a truce to words! Come forth, thou unclean spirit, or I will enter in and pluck thee by the tail!"

And the dragon crawled forth from the cavern, hissing and snorting in a very frenzy of rage, so that the mountains echoed and the earth rocked with his clamor. And his nostrils belched black columns of smoke,



and his eyes spat venom and tongues of flame issued from his mouth.

And when Kyrilo looked upon his evil countenance, he was seized with a great bitterness, and his strength was as the strength of a hundred. And he rushed upon the dragon and there in the open field they clashed, breast to breast, and a ring of fire compassed them round about. And Kyrilo belabored him with his mighty cudgel and smote him hip and thigh, until the dragon prayed for quarter and sank prostrate at the feet of his enemy.

And Kyrilo swung his cudgel above his head and would have brought it down upon the head of his adversary, but the dragon cried: "Stay, Kyrilushka! Why wouldst thou slaughter me and all my seed? When have I injured thee or wished thee ill? Rather should we dwell together in peace and brotherhood, for thou and I, my friend, might share the earth and none arise to challenge our dominion. We will divide the land in equal parts, and on this side I will hold sway and on the other thou, and half of all the treasure of the world shall be thy share and half shall come to me. And if our rule



*And there in the open field they clashed,
and a ring of fire compassed them
round about.*

should profit others naught, how can it injure us?"

And God lent to Kyrilo the serpent's guile, and he answered: "Let it be so. And for a mark between thy lands and mine, let us plough a furrow in the earth, and what lies on the one hand shall be thine and on the other, mine. And thou shalt draw the plough!"

And Kyrilo fashioned a plough of metal so heavy that a hundred oxen could not move it. And he yoked the dragon to the plough, and with his flail of iron he goaded him. And the dragon drew the plough from Kiev to the sea and made a furrow twenty fathoms deep. And when they came to the sea, his head hung low between his shoulders and his strength was as the strength of a babe, and he cried: "Release me from the yoke, Kyrilushka, for we have cleft the earth in twain."

And Kyrilo answered: "As we have cleft the earth, so let us cleave the waters. Or one day thou wilt come and cry with a loud voice: 'Thou hast stolen my water, Kyrilushka.' "

And Kyrilo drove the dragon into the blue

sea, and the waters covered him and the plough drew him down through the depths to the nethermost cave of the ocean, and there he lies even now and the plough of Kyrilo the Tanner lies on his back.

But as for Kyrilo, he returned to the cavern, and with one arm he flung aside the boulders and with the other the branches, and he bore the Princess to the palace of her father, and the people came forth to welcome him and made merry in the streets of Kiev.

And Vladímir the Prince said to Kyrilo: “What is there in my gift that thou wouldest have? I will heap thy vats with gold to the brim and running over. I will name thee my friend, and seat thee at my table and serve thee with bread and salt and pay thee homage.”

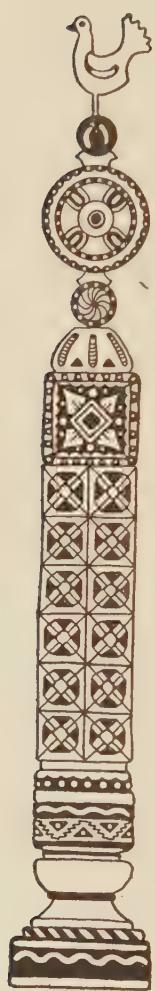
And Kyrilo, the mighty warrior, made answer to the Prince: “For thy love and fair speech God will reward thee. But if my vats are filled with gold, where shall I wash my hides? And if a peasant sit at a prince’s table, who shall know him for a peasant? Nor did I fight this fight for thee, my lord, but to dry the tears of children.”

And Kyrilo returned to his house, and he

fought no more battles but washed his hides
and dwelt in the grace of God.

And it is told that in the midst of the steppes the mountain of earth, upturned by the dragon when he drew the plough from Kiev to the sea, still rises twenty fathoms to the sky. And the peasants till the soil on either hand, but the mountain of earth shall rise forever to the glory of the name of Kyrilo the peasant, the tanner of hides.





TSAR SALTAN



TSAR SALTAN

THREE maidens sat at their spindles, and night came down over all the land.

“Were I Tsaritza,” said one, “I would bake *piroshki* for my lord, sweeter than the honey that the black bees cull.”

“Were I Tsaritza,” said her sister, “I would weave linen for his bed, softer than the bosom of the summer sea.”

“Were I Tsaritza,” said the youngest, “I would bear to my dear lord a noble son, and

he should be a mighty warrior and a wise ruler over men, and he should excel all others, yea, and his sire as well."

And the Tsar Saltan stood beneath their window, and smiled to hear their words. But the words of the youngest smote his heart, and he entered the chamber where they sat and spun.

"The blessing of God be on you," he said, "and on all your seed." And the maidens arose from their spindles and bowed to the ground. But the youngest he raised, saying: "Wilt thou be my wife and bear to me a noble son, who shall be a mighty warrior and a wise ruler, excelling all others and his sire as well?"

And she said: "Yea, Majesty."

"So be it then. And thy sisters shall leave this place and follow after us. And one shall be mistress of the kitchen and bake *piroshki*, sweeter than the honey that the black bees cull, and one shall preside over the looms and weave linens softer than the bosom of the summer sea." And the maiden laid her white hand in his, and he led her to his palace and her sisters followed after.

And they were wedded straightway, for the will of a Tsar is swiftly done, and the

wedding guests ate and drank and made merry, and when they had feasted they led the Tsar and his bride to a couch of ivory and prayed for the blessing of God upon their house.

But she who was mistress of the kitchen wept by the fire, and she who presided over the looms lamented at her weaving, and their hearts were filled with envy for the fortune of their sister.

And now it chanced that the Tsar was summoned forth to battle in a far country, and he kissed his wife and bade her guard herself as a dear treasure for the sake of his love, and he mounted his faithful steed and rode away to the wars. And for many weary months he came not again.

And his wife kept faith with the Tsar and bore him a noble son. And the mark of the Lord was upon him and he was the length of an *arshin* from crown to heels. And the Tsaritza dispatched a courier to bear the joyful tidings to her lord, and the babe she cherished in her bosom as an eagle a new-born eaglet.

But the envious sisters plotted together how they might bring disaster on her head, and they waylaid her courier and sent an-

other in his stead, to whom they gave false letters, reading: "Thy wife hath borne thee in the night an heir. And it is neither male nor female, nor a gray mouse nor yet a croaking frog, but some misshapen monster of ill omen."

And when the Tsar received the tidings, his heart grew hot with wrath against the Tsaritza who had betrayed her pledge. And he would have fallen on her courier and slain him. But the memory of her beauty stayed his hand, and he put by his sword and bowed his head and wept. And when he had done weeping, he gave a letter to the courier, which read:

"Let naught be done herein till I return,
nor any harm befall the Tsaritza."

And the two sisters awaited the coming of the courier, and descried him afar off. And they commanded that he be brought to them, and plied him with red wine, until he knew not day from night nor the fingers of his hand from the hairs of his head. And they drew the Tsar's letter from his pouch, and placed therein another in its stead and sealed it with the royal seal. And the courier lay all night as one bereft of life, and in the morning he arose and brought the letter to the

council of boyars. And the words of the letter were:

"Let the Tsaritza and her child be cast into the sea, and let no hair of them remain to vex my spirit, lest my wrath be visited on you and all your house."

And the boyars were sore at heart, for they loved the Tsaritza and were loth to do the bidding of their lord upon her. And they entered her chamber, and the chief boyar bowed before her and said: "The will of the Tsar is that thou and thy child shall be cast into the depths of the sea. Yet if thou wilt betake thyself from this place, so that no hair



of thy head remains to vex his spirit, thou shalt go forth unscathed."

And she answered: "Nay, for if ye do not the will of the Tsar upon me, he will surely slay you. And as for me, I am content to die. For life is bitter beneath the shadow of his hatred."

And she arose from her bed, and robed her body in a white garment and bowed before the icon of the Lord, and took her babe into her arms and went forth to the shores of the blue sea. And there they placed her in an oaken chest whose seams were sealed with resin, and cast her on the waters.

And the chest floated on the deep blue sea, and the stars shone in the deep blue sky, and a single cloud sped through the heavens. And the weeping Tsaritza looked upon her babe, and saw that he grew in strength and grace, not from day to day, but from hour to hour. And three nights and three days went by, and the child besought the wave whereon they rode, saying: "Happy wave, free to wander as thou wilt, pity us, pent close within an oaken chest. Thou canst burnish a pebble on the sandy beach or play with the seafoam or lift a ship upon thy curling crest. But we must crouch within this

narrow house, my mother that hath wept from dawn to dusk, and I, a new-born child. Therefore destroy us not, kind wave, but cast us forth upon some friendly shore."

And the wave heard his prayer, and bore them to the white sands of an island in the sea, and laid them gently on the shore and hied him back to join his merry brethren.

But still the chest imprisoned them. And the child cried: "Nay, weep not, little mother, for thou shalt see how I will burst thy bonds and set thee free."

And he stood upright in the chest, so that his crown touched one end and his soles the other, and he strove against the oaken timbers, and in the end they yielded to his strength and the chest was riven in twain, and he led his mother forth into the sunlight.

And they stood in the midst of a flowering meadow at the foot of a steep hill, and a green oak grew on its crest, and the blue sea closed the island round about and sparkled in the sun. And the youth rejoiced in his freedom, but the head of the Tsaritza drooped upon her breast.

And he thought: "My mother-Tsaritza is sorrowful. But I will comfort her with food and drink."

And he fashioned a bow from the branch of a tree and from the stalk of a reed an arrow, and went forth in search of food. He crossed the flowering meadow and the steep hill, and from the sea beyond he heard a cry of anguish, and saw how a huge hawk did battle with a swan. And though the swan beat her white wings against him, his strength prevailed and under his great pinion he held her fast. Then the youth sped his arrow from the bow and smote the hawk, and from his breast gushed the red blood and he sank down beneath the waves, crying aloud but not in the voice of a bird.

And the swan came close to the shore, and laid her head in the hand of the youth, and when she spoke she spoke in the Russian tongue.

“Thou art my saviour and my faithful friend. Grieve not that thou hast spent thine arrow in my service, so that the sharpness of thy hunger must go a little longer unap-peased. I will repay thee tenfold. For know thou hast not succored a swan like any other, nor slain a simple hawk. I am a living maid, and thou hast freed me from the power of a black sorcerer. Therefore am I sworn to serve thee in fealty and love, and do

thy bidding even to the uttermost. And now go to thy mother who waits for thee, and sleep this night in peace.”

And she flew over the waves, and he returned to his mother and slept that night in peace. And at daybreak he opened wide his eyes for lo! a wonder rose before them. On the crest of the steep hill, where yestereve a single oak had spread its shadow, a city stood with battlemented walls and ivory towers and the gold domes of palaces and slender spires reaching to the sky. And he awoke his mother, crying: “A golden world hath grown up in the night!”

And they went toward the city, and as they neared the gates a bell pealed from the steeple of a church, and then a second and a third, and a great clamor rose within the walls, and the gates opened and a multitude burst forth as a swollen river bursts forth from its dam. And all the people greeted them with loud and joyful cries, and the boyars bowed before them, and the chief boyar placed upon the head of the fair youth a golden crown, and said:

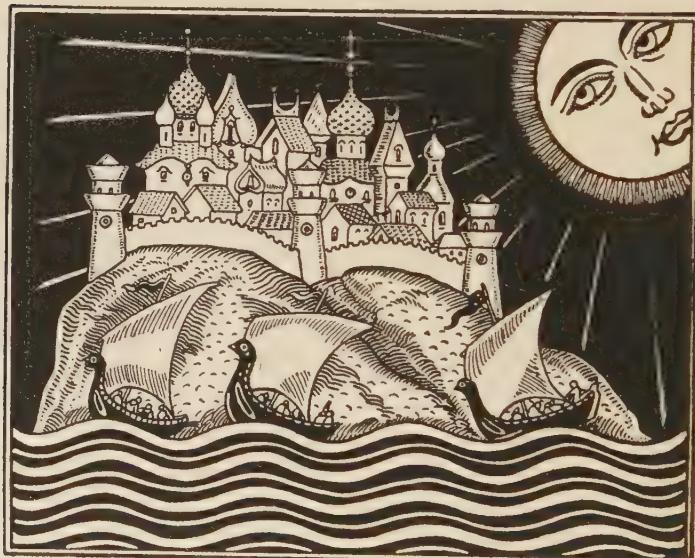
“By the grace of God and with thy mother’s blessing, thou shalt rule over us in

peace and wisdom. And thy name shall be called Guidon."

And so it was.

And it happened one day that the wind troubled the waters and drove across them a small fleet of ships whose white sails bellied in the breeze. And all the seamen gazed in wonderment upon the island and the fair city that crowned the summit of the hill. And from the fortress guns boomed a salute and signalled to them to approach the shore.

And they guided their ships to the island, and Guidon welcomed them to his kingdom and ordered that a feast be set before them of



food and wine, whose like hath never been told in words nor pictured with a pen, but only eaten in a tale of wonder. And when they had had their fill he questioned them, saying: "Whence do ye come, most welcome guests, for ye are the first to reach these shores? What cargoes do ye carry and whither go ye hence?"

"We come from the farther side of the world, and carry a treasure of the skins of strange beasts to the tsardom of the glorious Tsar Saltan."

"Fortune attend you, and bear to the Tsar the greetings of Guidon."

And the ships put forth to sea and Guidon looked after them with sorrow in his soul.

And now the white swan came flying over the deep, and she spake to Guidon and said: "Peace to thee, Prince! Why is thy brow o'ercast like the heavens on a rainy day?"

"I grieve for the sight of my father, and his blessing on my head."

"Then grieve no more, but follow the course of the ships that sail to thy father's tsardom."

And she beat her wings upon the water, so that the spray rose to the height of a man and covered Guidon from the crown of his

head to the soles of his feet, and he became a gnat. And he flew far out to sea and overtook the ships, and hid himself in a crevice between the boards.

And at length they reached the tsardom of Saltan, and the merchants betook themselves to his palace and the little gnat followed after. And the Tsar sat upon his throne, and his robes were of royal ermine but his brow was dark with sorrow. And at his right hand sat the sister who was mistress of the kitchen, and at his left hand she who presided over the looms. And their eyes were fixed upon the eyes of the Tsar.

And he bade his guests seat themselves at his table, and he sat at their head. And he said: "Long have ye wandered, my friends, and far. What have ye found of good or ill on the farther side of the world, and mid what strange scenes have ye tarried?"

"We have found both good and ill on the farther side of the world. But the strangest sight that met our eyes was an island in the midst of the blue waters. And though we have passed it by a score of times, never till now hath it borne aught but a single oak on a steep green hill. But now a mighty city crowns the summit, its streets of marble and

its palaces of shining gold, and he who rules the city is Guidon, who bade us bear thee greetings in his name."

"Truly, if God be willing, I will see this island and talk with Prince Guidon."

But the sisters who watched the eyes of the Tsar were loth that he should journey thither, and she who was mistress of the kitchen mocked and said: "This is a wonder for mariners to gape at, but I have seen a wonder worthy of the Tsar. In a green forest a fir tree grows, and underneath the fir tree sits a small gray squirrel. He cracks nuts diligently all the day, nor are they nuts



of wood, but every shell is made of precious gold and every kernel is a clear green emerald. And as he cracks, he sings the songs of Russia. Here is in truth a wonder, Majesty."

And the Tsar gave ear to this wonder, but spake no word in reply. And a great rage seized upon Guidon the gnat, and he hummed about the head of his mother's sister, then flew into her eye so that she cried aloud in pain. And all the courtiers rushed with sword and lance to capture him, but he harried them, lighting upon their noses, and when they would have clapped their hands upon him, he darted beyond their reach and mocked at them behind the shoulder of the Tsar. And in the end he vanished through the window and crossed the sea, and when he touched the shore of his own land he turned again into a comely youth.

And the white swan came through the waves to greet him and she said: "Thou hast visited the tsardom of thy sire and looked upon his face. Wherefore, then, are thine eyes still sad and thy heart uncomforted?"

"For a wonder that was told in the palace of the Tsar, my father. In a green forest a fir tree grows, and underneath the fir tree sits

a small gray squirrel. He cracks nuts diligently all the day, nor are they nuts of wood, but every shell is made of precious gold and every kernel is a clear green emerald. And as he cracks, he sings the songs of Russia. Dost thou know this wonder, white swan? Or do they falsely swear that tell of it?"

"Nay, it is truly told," replied the swan, "and is well known to me. Therefore be merry. Return unto the palace and see what thou shalt see."

And Guidon ascended the hill, and as he approached the palace gates he saw that a great throng was gathered, their faces bright with smiles. And they made way before him and disclosed a tall fir tree, and underneath it a squirrel sat and cracked nuts diligently, and at his right he laid the golden shells and at his left the kernels of clear emerald. And he marked not the laughter of the throng, but cracked his nuts and sang the songs of Russia. And Guidon cried: "My thanks to thee, belovèd swan, and the dear God grant thee such happiness as thou hast given me. Now let a crystal house be built to shelter the squirrel of the Prince, and let a guard be set to watch that none molest or do him injury. And let some holy palmer that hath

put behind him the temptations of the world sit by his side and keep the reckoning, that the wealth of Guidon may increase, and the glory of his city be spread through the white world.”

And all was done according to his word.

And the days passed, and a second fleet approached the shores of the island and the guns of the fortress fired a salute and the seamen disembarked. And Guidon welcomed them and gave them hearty cheer and questioned them.

“Whence do ye come, good friends? What do your vessels carry and whither go ye hence?”

“We come from the islands of the East, and our vessels carry sweet spices and rare silks to the tsardom of the glorious Tsar Saltan.”

“May fair winds speed you on your way, and say to the Tsar Saltan that Prince Guidon doth wish him well.”

And the merchants bowed before Guidon and went to sea. And he gazed after them, and the white swan came flying over the waters and looked upon Guidon but said no word. And Guidon said: “My spirit hungers for my father’s tsardom.”

And she beat her wings upon the water, so that the spray rose to the height of a man and covered Guidon from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, and he became a bee. And he flew far out to sea and overtook the ships and hid himself in the cap of a mariner.

And at length they reached the tsardom of Saltan, and he bade the merchants to his palace and the little bee came after. And the Tsar sat on his throne and his robes were of cloth of gold, but his heart was cold with woe. And the sisters of the Tsaritza sat one on either hand.

And the Tsar feasted his guests and spake to them, saying: "Long have ye been from home, my friends and brothers. How have ye fared on the farther side of the world, and what marvels have ye beheld?"

"Well and ill have we fared, O Sire, and trusted in God the Father. And many marvels have we seen but none so wondrous as an island in the sea, crowned by a city of golden palaces. And before the palace of the Prince, beneath a fir tree, in a crystal house built for his comfort sits a small gray squirrel, who sings the songs of Russia and cracks nuts diligently all the day. Nor are

they nuts of wood, but every shell is made of precious gold and every kernel is a clear green emerald. And a huge guard is set to watch that none molest him, and a holy palmer keeps the reckoning. And when the royal troops march by the house, they halt and present arms. And from the shells is forged the gold coin of the realm and, for the emeralds, they are sent to foreign lands and bartered to supply the people's needs. And there is neither poverty nor woe nor any wretched hovels, but all are housed in splendor and spend their days in laughter and in joy. And Guidon is their Prince, and bade us say to thee he wished thee well."

And the Tsar hearkened, all amazed, to the words of the seamen, and said: "God grant me life, and I will journey to this wondrous island and look upon the face of Prince Guidon."

But the sisters smiled disdainfully upon the mariners and she that was mistress of the looms spoke.

"A squirrel that cracks nuts! A marvel for a peasant! What though they be of gold and emerald! Hath not the Tsar such store of gold and jewels that fifty squirrels could not match their treasure? If thou wouldst



*"A small gray squirrel sings the songs of
Russia and cracks nuts diligently all
the day, and a huge guard is set to
watch that none molest him."*

hear of marvels worth thy note, there dwells a maiden, Sire, beyond the sea, so fair that he who looks upon her face is fain to look forever. So radiant is she that the very sunbeams pale before her coming and when night falls her beauty lights the earth. And for a sign beneath her golden plaits a crescent moon lies hid, and on her white breast shines a silver star. Her gait is proud and stately as the swan's, and when she speaks her voice sounds sweetly as a pleasant stream that laughs to see the sun. And majesty sits on her brow and marks her for the daughter of a Tsar. If thou wouldest see a wonder, Majesty, here is a wonder meet for a Tsar's delight."

And the sage mariners spake no word, for well they knew the vanity of reasoning with woman. But Guidon the bee could not contain his wrath, and buzzed about the head of his mother's sister and lit upon her nose and drove his dart so deep into her flesh that she cried out in pain. But all the courtiers, mindful of the gnat that had tormented them, stood at their posts as though a sudden blight had withered their limbs. And in the end he vanished through the window and crossed the sea, and when he

touched the shore of his own land he turned again into a comely youth.

And the white swan arose from beneath the surface of the quiet waters and said: "Welcome, my prince. Why dost thou sigh like the wind in the caves of the sea?"

"For my heart that is barren of love."

"Choose thou a maid, and should thy choice fall on the daughter of Kostchei or even on that one whose beauty no man hath beheld and lived, yet shalt thou win her for thy wife."

"My choice hath fallen on a maid so fair that he who looks upon her face is fain to look forever. So radiant is she that the very sunbeams pale before her coming, and when night falls her beauty lights the earth. And for a sign beneath her golden plaits a crescent moon lies hid, and on her white breast shines a silver star. Her gait is proud and stately like the swan's, and when she speaks her voice sounds sweetly as a pleasant stream that laughs to see the sun. And majesty sits on her brow and marks her for the daughter of a Tsar. And yet I have not seen this maid. It may be that they lie who tell the tale. But if it be not truth, Guidon shall go

unwedded to his grave, for he will have no other."

"They do not lie. The maid is as they say. But I would serve thee with wise counsel, prince. A wife is not a gauntlet, to be thrust beneath thy girdle and forgotten, or stripped from off thy hand and flung to the four winds. Therefore bethink thee well ere thou dost woo this maid, lest thou shouldst weep hereafter."

And Prince Guidon cried: "I have be-thought me well and vow that naught will stay me from my purpose. Nay, I will search through thirty tsardoms if need be, do battle with Kostchei the Deathless, or seek that bird of fire from whom no mystery is hidden, but I will find her out."

And the swan sighed so deeply that all the tender plumage of her breast was stirred, and she replied: "There is no need to search through thirty tsardoms, since she whom thou wouldst wed is near at hand. I am that maid that thou hast named and I will be thy bride, for so is it decreed."

And she beat her wings upon the water so that the spray covered her and she was hidden from the sight of Guidon, and when



the spray subsided, he saw before him a maid so fair that he was fain to look on her forever. And for a sign beneath her golden plaits a crescent moon lay hid, and on her breast there shone a silver star. And the prince fell at her feet and kissed the hem of her robe, and arose and embraced her, saying: "Such joy be thine as thou hast given me, belovèd of my soul."

And they went together to the palace and knelt before the mother of Guidon. And Guidon said: "This is the maiden I have chosen out of all the world to be my faithful wife and thy meek daughter. Therefore we

pray thee, bless thy children's love, for none may live in happiness or peace that lack a mother's blessing."

And the Tsaritza wept with joy, and held the icon of the Lord above their heads and cried: "May God the Father have you in his keeping."

And she embraced them, and the bells pealed forth, and a great feast was spread to which were bidden high and low, that they might share the fortune of their Prince and bow in homage to his beauteous bride.

And Guidon lived happily with his young wife, and the days sped by like running water.

And again the wind troubled the waters, and drove across them a small fleet of ships whose white sails bellied in the breeze. And the guns of the fortress signalled to them to approach the shore and they cast anchor, and the mariners debarked. And Guidon bade them to his palace, and placed them at his table and when they had eaten and drunk, he questioned them.

"Whence come ye, worthy seamen, and wherein do ye traffic? And in God's good time, whither go ye hence?"

"We come from a strange land of giants

and dragons, and fair sea-maidens with green glistening tales. And we have trafficked in forbidden things, and journey now to the famed tsardom of the glorious Tsar Saltan."

"God grant you a prosperous voyage! And bear these words of greeting to the Tsar. 'Let him redeem his pledge to visit this green island and look upon the face of Prince Guidon.' "

And the merchants departed, but Guidon remained in the palace with his wife. And the wind drove the ships to the tsardom of Saltan, and the merchants hastened to bring to him their tidings. And the Tsar sat on his throne, and his robe was encrusted with jewels but his soul was sick unto death. And the sisters of the Tsaritza sat one on either hand.

And the Tsar said: "Long and patiently have we bided your coming, friends. Have ye met with fair fortune or foul on the farther side of the world, and what wonders will ye narrate?"

"Fair fortune and foul have we met on the farther side of the world, and we can tell of giants and dragons and of fair sea-maid-

ens with green glistening tails, and of many strange wonders beside. But the greatest wonder of all is an island in the midst of the sea whereon a golden city rises to the sky, and a gray squirrel in a crystal house cracks nuts of gold and emerald, and a princess dwells, so fair that he who looks upon her face is fain to look forever. So radiant is she that the very sunbeams pale before her coming, and when night falls her beauty lights the earth. And for a sign beneath her golden plaits a crescent moon lies hid and on her white breast shines a silver star. And he who rules the land is called Guidon, and all the people praise him and name him the wisest among rulers over men. And in these words he greets the Tsar Saltan: ‘Let him redeem his pledge to visit this green island and look upon the face of Prince Guidon.’ ”

And now the Tsar would brook no further stay, and ordered that a fleet be launched forthwith, to bear him and his court to that strange island in the sea. And the envious sisters sought to sway him from his purpose, crying: “This is a folly fit for babes and witting. For where hath it been seen or heard that cities should rise up and build them-

selves, or squirrels crack gold nuts, or maidens wear the moon and stars to deck themselves? They do but mock thee, Sire, that tell of this, and if thou journey to this island, be sure thou journeyest in vain."

And the Tsar cried: "Am I a child at the bidding of womankind, or am I the Tsar Saltan? Go or go not, as it please you, but seek no more to shapè my will to yours!" And he went forth to the ships, and the two sisters followed after.

And Prince Guidon sat in the topmost tower of his palace, and looked out over the sea. And the waters were tranquil, and against the distant sky he saw a ship and then a second and a third, and knew them for the fleet of Tsar Saltan that sailed to him across the boundless sea. And he cried aloud in his great joy, and went forth to greet them.

And the Tsar looked, all amazed, upon the golden city on the hill, and Guidon took him by the hand but spake no word, and led him to the palace, and there before the palace gates the squirrel sat beneath the fir tree in his crystal house, and cracked his nuts of gold and emerald, and sang the songs of Russia. And the Tsar laughed to see him.



*And Prince Guidon sat in the topmost
tower of his palace, and looked out
over the sea.*

And they entered the great hall of the palace and there stood Guidon's wife, so fair that he who looked on her was fain to look forever. And by the hand she led the Tsaritza.

And when the Tsar beheld her, he cried out: "Who hath betrayed me? Let him be punished with a traitor's death!"

And Guidon answered: "She that was poisoned by a buzzing gnat. She that the black bee envenomed with his sting."

And the two sisters fell at the feet of the Tsar, and prayed for mercy. But he answered them: "As ye were merciful, shall mercy be shown you."

But the Tsaritza knelt beside them, and laid her hand in the hand of her lord and said: "For the sake of our youth in the house of my father, I pray thee grant this prayer."

And he raised her from the ground, and said: "So be it. But let them begone hence, and never come again where I may see them."

And the sisters were led away, but the Tsar Saltan blessed his son and the beautiful Princess, and they sat them down and feasted for three days and nights. And thereafter the Tsar returned to his kingdom

with his Tsaritza, but the Prince Guidon dwelt on the island with his bride and the gray squirrel. And he was a mighty warrior and a wise ruler over men, excelling all others, yea, and the Tsar Saltan also.



THE SOLDIER AND
THE DEMONS



THE SOLDIER AND THE DEMONS

A SOLDIER served the Lord and the great Tsar for five and twenty years, and all the meed of his service was three dry loaves. And he placed the loaves in his boot and left the palace, and as he went his way he pondered thus: "For five and twenty years I served the Tsar who gave me meat and drink, armor to cover me and a faithful steed to bear me into battle. But now my service is ended. I hunger and go cold. I have neither steed to bear nor armor

to cover me, but three dry loaves are all my scanty store."

And he went farther, and an aged mendicant approached him and bowed before him and humbly sued for alms in the Lord's name. And he drew forth a loaf and gave it to the aged man, and left two for his hunger. And the beggar blessed him, saying: "Go with God!"

And he went farther, and a second mendicant approached him and bowed before him and humbly sued for alms in the Lord's name. And he drew forth another loaf and gave it, leaving one for his hunger. And the beggar blessed him, saying: "Go with God!"

And he went farther, and a third mendicant approached him and bowed before him and humbly sued for alms in the Lord's name. And he drew forth the one loaf that remained and would have broken it in equal parts but, taking counsel with himself, he thought: "If he should meet his brothers on the road and they should say to him: 'Thou hast but half a loaf and we the whole,' it may be he would grieve. Nay, I will give him all, and though I hunger, yet my arms are strong and my heart willing, and God will

not forsake me.” And he gave away the loaf.

And the beggar said: “God will reward thee, soldier, and I will lend thee aid upon thy way. Tell me whereof thou art in need, that I may fill the lack.”

“Naught but thy blessing, venerable father. For what should I beg of thy poverty?”

“Regard it not, but speak out thy desire.”

“Nay, I lack naught, but I will take from thee in memory of this hour the pack of cards that lies beneath thy habit.”

And the old man drew forth the cards and gave them to the soldier, saying: “Play with this pack, and though thou play against the prince of gamesters, thou canst not choose but win. And take as well my knapsack. And if thou shouldst encounter on the road aught that thy fancy craves, or bird or beast or any living thing, open, and cry, ‘Enter my knapsack, bird, beast’ or what thou wilt, and he will enter in.”

And the soldier took the knapsack and the pack of cards, and thanked the beggar and went his way. And whether the road was long or short, he came at length within sight of a lake and three wild geese flew over it. And the soldier thought: “Now let me try

the virtue of this gift," and, loosing the cord that bound its throat, he cried: "Enter my knapsack, ye wild geese that fly over the lake." And the wild geese entered the knapsack, and he drew close the cord that bound its throat.

And he went farther, and in the end he came to a great city and knocked upon the portal of an inn. And the host bade him enter. And he drew forth the wild geese from his knapsack and said: "Garnish the first that I may sup thereof; for the second give me *vodka* to slake my thirst; the third is thine in barter for thy service."

And all was done according to his word, and the soldier feasted. And as he ate and drank and took his ease, he looked from the casement and saw a palace ravaged and despoiled, its crystals shattered and its golden domes tottering to their fall.

And he summoned the innkeeper and questioned him, saying: "What is this palace that rises desolate here in my sight?"

And he answered: "It is the palace of the Prince who rules the city, and it is accurst. For seven long years it lies untenanted, save by the demons of the netherworld. Nightly they hold their impious revels within its



*"My lord and prince, humbly I crave thy
leave to sleep beneath the roof of
yon deserted palace."*

walls, and feast and dance, carousing till the dawn. And many have striven to drive them forth, but all have striven in vain."

And the soldier sought audience of the Prince, and when he was brought before him, he said: "My lord and Prince, humbly I crave thy leave to sleep a single night beneath the roof of yon deserted palace."

And the Prince made reply: "I wish thee well, brave soldier, and deny thy suit. For many before thee have essayed the task, and none come forth alive."

"Yet I would go, for the waters may not drown a Russian soldier nor the flames consume him. For five and twenty years I served the Lord and the great Tsar, and no harm befell me. How can I perish then in thy domain in a single night?"

"Think upon those who went before thee, alive and in the flower of their strength, whom the dawn found a heap of mouldering bones."

"I think upon them, and yet I would go."

"Go then, since thou wilt have it so, and God go at thy side."

And the soldier went to the palace and entered the hall of state. And he flung his knapsack into the corner and his sabre

against the wall and, seating himself upon the Prince's throne, he filled his pipe and smoked and was content.

And as the bells tolled midnight from the steeple of the church, straightway a horde of demons appeared from nowhere, and leaped and clamored and made merry, and all the air was noxious with their din.

And presently they spied the soldier and hailed him, crying: "Ho, soldier! Art thou come to join our revels? Say, wilt thou game with us?"

And the soldier answered: "That will I. But with my cards, good demons."

And he drew forth his pack and dealt the cards. And he won the first turn and dealt again. And he won the second and the third, and though the demons practised all their wiles, they could not outplay the soldier, and all their gold lay heaped beneath his hand.

And the hoary demon who commanded them, cried: "Let the bags of silver and of gold that lie in our treasure-house be brought, and staked against the cunning of the soldier."

And the imp who was their messenger descended to the netherworld, and returned



laden with a hundred bags of gold and silver.

And so they played again, and the soldier won. And the imp bore on his back the bags of silver and laid them at the soldier's feet. And he said to the hoary demon whom he served: "Grandsire, the silver pieces are gamed away."

"Then let us play the gold."

And the soldier dealt the cards, and they played again. And he won a bag of gold, and a second, and a third, until the fifty bags lay heaped beneath his feet.

And the demons gnashed their teeth in

rage for their lost treasure and they cried: "Now we will rend thee, soldier, limb from limb, and so devour thee. And thy bones shall be laid upon the threshold for him that finds them."

And the soldier thought: "Is it so indeed, my friends? Then let me set a feast fit for your eating."

And from the corner of the hall he brought his knapsack and, opening it, cried: "What do ye see in my hand, ye fiends of Satan?"

"Naught but a knapsack."

"Then by the Lord's will and the soldier's word, enter my knapsack." And they entered in. And so great was their number that each was pressed close on the other, and none could move by so much as the breadth of a hair. And the soldier drew fast the cord and hung the knapsack on the wall, and with a quiet heart he laid him down to rest.

And at the break of dawn the Prince commanded his servants: "Go to the palace, and bring me tidings of the gallant soldier who slept beneath its roof. And if he is slain by the hand of the Evil One, then gather his bones together and give them burial."

And they went to the palace and sought for the soldier's bones upon the threshold.

but found them not. And fearfully they entered, and crept through the deserted corridors and came at length into the hall of state. And there they beheld the soldier, who smoked his pipe and bided in peace their coming.

And they said: "May misfortune never visit thee, most valiant soldier! Surely thou art belovèd of the Lord, since thou hast slept this night within the palace and lived to greet the dawn. Say, was thy slumber sweet? And how didst thou prevail upon the demons to spare thy life?"

"As for the demons, they are less than the smoke that issues from my pipe. But their store of gold and silver is worthy the ransom of a tsar, and all is mine." And the Prince's servants marvelled to see the shining heaps of treasure that lay on every hand.

But the soldier bade them hasten to do his bidding. "Go to the forge," he said, "and bring me hither two sturdy smiths, armed with stout sledges and an anvil wrought of iron."

And the servants did as he commanded, and brought him two sturdy smiths, and they bore mighty sledges on their shoulders and on their backs an anvil wrought of iron.

And the soldier said: "Take yonder knapsack that hangs against the wall and lay it upon your anvil, and beat upon it with your sledges as worthy blacksmiths and as men of might."

And they took down the knapsack, and would have borne it upon their shoulders to the anvil. But all their strength sufficed not for the task, and they must needs draw it behind them on the ground. And they whispered one to the other: "It must be that the fiends themselves lie captive within this knapsack, and weigh it down with evil."

And the demons cried: "Yea! Yea! We lie within! Harm us not, little fathers! Harm us not!"

But they laid the knapsack upon the anvil, and beat upon it with their heavy sledges as worthy blacksmiths and as men of might. And the demons writhed in torment and begged for mercy, and in the end they could endure no more.

And they cried: "Have pity, soldier, and release us that we may run free! Forever will we hold thy name in dread, but for this palace, no fiend will venture to set foot herein, though the Prince himself should bear him company."

And the soldier bade the blacksmiths stay their hands and, opening the knapsack, he set the demons free. And they crept forth and went their way, nor paused to look behind them.

But the soldier seized by his cloven hoof the last to issue forth, and pricked him with his knife till the blood flowed, and said: "Seal me a covenant, demon, in thy blood, that thou wilt serve me without craft or guile." And the demon sealed the covenant in his blood, and fled after his brothers.

And they reached the fiery furnace of the netherworld and beat upon the gates, and so sorry was their plight that terror seized upon the young and old that dwell in Satan's realm, and they placed sentinels at the four corners of their kingdom to keep close vigil, lest the soldier with his wondrous knapsack should knock at their portals.

But the soldier stood before the Prince's throne, and said: "Thus did I and thus did I, and thy palace is delivered of the demons' curse."

And the Prince replied: "My love is thine, and thou shalt dwell beside me as my brother."

And so it came to pass. And the soldier

was honored by the Prince, and his wealth was plentiful as grain in harvest-time.

And when a year had passed the soldier took unto himself a wife, and when another year had passed God blessed them with a son.

And it chanced upon a time that the child sickened, and so grievous was his malady that no leech could heal him. And though the soldier summoned them from far and near, their simples were without the virtue of a copper coin.

And at length the soldier bethought himself of the covenant that lay hidden in his breast, and drawing it forth, he cried: "Where dost thou bide, old demon, that didst pledge thy word in blood to serve me without craft or guile?"

And in a moment the demon stood before him and bowed to the ground and said: "What is my master's will?"

"Here lies my son, ill of a secret malady that none can heal. Heal thou my son."

And the demon drew forth a tumbler from the fold of his attire, and filled it with clear water, and placed it at the bedside of the child. And he said to the soldier: "Look within."

And the soldier looked into the tumbler and the demon spoke again, saying: "What dost thou see?"

"I see Death standing at my son's white feet."

"Then count thyself a happy father, for thy son will be restored to thee in health. But if Death stood at his head, no power could save him." And the demon took water from the tumbler, and besprayed the soldier's son and made him whole.

And the soldier said: "Give me the tumbler, and I will ask no further service of thee." And the demon gave him the tumbler, and took in return the covenant sealed in his blood, and went his way.

And the glory of the soldier's name spread over land and sea, for when he looked into the tumbler he knew what man would live and what man die, and great generals and boyars called him to the four corners of the world to heal their ills.

And so it happened that the Prince himself was stricken, and the soldier was summoned to his side. And filling the tumbler with clear water, he looked within and saw Death standing at the Prince's head.

And the soldier said: "My lord, no power

can save thee. Death stands at thy head, and in three hours' time the tale of all thy days is at an end."

But the word of the soldier angered the Prince, and he cried: "Great generals and boyars hast thou healed in the four corners of the world, and now wilt thou deny me succor? If it be so indeed, the scaffold shall be built for thee straightway and I will see thee hang before I die."

And the soldier pondered long upon the Prince's word, and in the end he parleyed thus with Death.

"Give to the prince my span of life, and take me in his stead. Early or late thy summons must be heard, and better far to go with thee in peace than perish on the scaffold."

And he looked again into the tumbler, and saw that Death stood at the Prince's feet. And he besprayed the Prince with water from the tumbler and made him whole. And he said to Death: "Grant me three hours that I may take leave of my wife and son." And Death gave him three hours and the soldier set forth to his dwelling, but when he came there, his limbs would bear him no longer and he laid him down upon his bed.

And Death stood by his side. "Now take leave of thy wife and son," he said, "for in three minutes thy life in this white world will reach its end."

And the soldier drew from beneath the pillow his wondrous knapsack and opened it, and whispered: "What dost thou see in my hand, O friend of man?"

And Death replied: "A knapsack."

"Enter my knapsack, Death," the soldier said, and Death entered in. And the soldier sprang from his bed, restored to life, and drawing fast the cord that bound its throat, he bore the knapsack to the very heart of the great forest. And there he bound it to the



topmost branch of a green aspen, and went his way.

And from that hour Death came to none, but life abounded over all the earth, and no soul departed.

And the years came and went, and it chanced that the soldier walked one day upon the highroad that led to the Prince's city. And he met with an ancient crone, so withered that she bowed as the wind blew.

And he said: "Good Morrow to thee, grandam. The mark of a great age is on thy brow. It must be that Death should have laid his hand upon thee long years ago."

"Long years, my son. For I had but a single hour to live when thou didst take him captive. And now I must live on, though my toilworn body cries for peace. But without Death how can I know the way? Thou hast sinned grievously against the Lord, good soldier, and thou must answer to Him for the sorrowing ones that droop beneath the burden of their years."

And the soldier answered: "I will set Death free, though he slay me. For my sins are thick upon my head, and better that I expiate them now while I am in the fulness of my strength, than suffer the weight of the

Lord's anger upon a back feeble and bent as thine."

And he went to the very heart of the great forest and stood beneath the aspen, upon whose topmost branch his knapsack swayed in the wind. And he cried: "Ho, Death! Dost thou still live?"

And Death answered: "I live, little father."

And the soldier brought down his knapsack, and loosed the cord that bound its throat and set Death free. And he laid him down upon his bed and bade his wife and son farewell, and besought Death to take his soul away. But Death replied: "Thou hast offended me beyond forgiveness, and I will not serve thee. Let the fiends do with thee as they will." And he departed to bear peace to the weary, but the soldier he left in life.

And the soldier thought: "I will not tarry, but betake myself straightway to the netherworld, that the hosts of Satan may cast me into the fiery pit and purge me of my sins."

And he bade farewell to friend and foe and took his knapsack on his back, and set forth on his journey to the netherworld. And he went a short way and he went a long

way, and he went a deep way and a shallow way, but in the end he reached the borders of the netherworld. And sentinels kept watch at the four corners, but the soldier knocked upon the gate.

And the keeper of the gate cried: "Who goes there?"

"A sinful soul that would be purged of sin."

"What dost thou bear upon thy back?"

"Naught but a knapsack."

And now the keeper of the gate beat the alarm, and all the demons scampered to and fro and barred the casements and bolted the portals with bolts of iron.



And the soldier called aloud upon the Prince of Darkness. "Satan, be merciful! Cast me into the flames! I would do penance for my sins, and be at peace."

But Satan answered: "Return as thou hast come, for thou shalt not enter here."

"Then give me ere I go two hundred souls, and I will proffer them unto the Lord, that he may grant me pardon for their sake."

"I will add fifty to their number, so thou depart straightway, nor linger within the borders of my realm."

And it was done as he commanded.

And the soldier bore them to Paradise, and knocked upon the gate. And the keeper of the gate cried: "Who goes there?"

"A soldier and two hundred and fifty souls, delivered from the everlasting flames and proffered unto the Lord."

And the keeper of the gate said to the Lord: "A soldier and two hundred and fifty souls, delivered from the everlasting flames, seek entry into Paradise."

And the Lord said: "Admit the souls, but drive the soldier forth."

And when the soldier heard the Lord's decree, he gave his knapsack into the hands of the youngest soul and said: "When thou hast

entered, open the knapsack, and cry: ‘Enter my knapsack, soldier,’ that I may enter and rejoice with thee in Paradise.”

And wide were flung the gates of Paradise and the souls entered in. And last to enter was the youngest soul who bore the soldier’s knapsack in her hand. And the gates closed behind her, and when she found herself among the spirits of the blessed, so great was her joy that she thought no more upon the soldier’s words.

And so he was shut out from Paradise, and he must needs return again to earth, and live and live and live.



IVAN TSAREVITCH AND
THE GRAY WOLF



IVAN TSAREVITCH AND THE GRAY WOLF

FAR away and many years ago, a mighty Tsar ruled wisely in his tsardom, and his name was called Demyán Danílovitch.

And he had three stalwart sons, and the eldest was called Klym Tsarevitch, and the second was called Pyotr Tsarevitch, and the youngest was called Ivan Tsarevitch. And he loved his sons beyond all other things, and after them he loved the apple tree that

grew in beauty in his palace garden and bore him golden fruit.

But in an evil hour a thief came and plundered his tree, and the Tsar went in sorrow, and hunger fled from his board and sleep from his pillow. And he bade his sons into his presence and spoke to them, saying: "Friends of my heart and my belovèd sons! The time is come when ye may serve me well. Into my garden in the depth of night a thief has found his way, and ravished of its fruit my golden tree. And I am sick at heart, for I would suffer death more gladly than the loss of this my dearest treasure. Therefore, give heed. On him that takes the thief I will bestow the half of all my tsardom while I live, half when I die."

And his three sons took counsel one with the other, and they resolved to go each night in turn to watch for the bold thief.

And on the first night, Klym Tsarevitch betook himself into the garden, and laid him down in the soft grass beneath the apple tree. And for a space he scanned the earth and heavens, but no thief appeared. And presently he slumbered, nor woke till the noon-day sun blazed in the sky. And loudly yawning, he went before the Tsar and said:

“Sire, I have watched this night beside thy tree, but no thief appeared to pluck the golden apples.”

And Pyotr Tsarevitch, on the second night, betook himself into the garden, and laid him down in the soft grass beneath the apple tree. And for a space he scanned the earth and heavens, but no thief appeared. And presently he slumbered, nor woke till the noonday sun blazed in the sky. And loudly yawning, he went before the Tsar and said: “Sire, I have watched this night beside thy tree, but no thief appeared to pluck the golden apples.”

And on the third night, Ivan Tsarevitch in his turn went to the garden to await the thief. And he stood motionless beneath the tree, and bided what should come.

And at deep midnight all the garden was lighted suddenly as by a flame, and from the east, swift as a falling star, a bird of fire flew toward the apple tree. And her plumage was brighter than the sun, and turned night into day.

And Ivan Tsarevitch pressed close against the tree, nor ventured to draw breath, and the bird of fire alighted and plucked a golden apple from the bough. And she

plucked a second and a third, and when she had plucked twelve, Ivan Tsarevitch came forth from his shelter and seized her by the tail.

And she let fall the golden apples, and beat her wings and strove with all her might to free herself, nor strove in vain. But ere she loosed his hold, Ivan Tsarevitch had plucked from her shining tail a single plume that lighted all the garden with its splendor.

And Ivan Tsarevitch went before his father and said: "Sire, I have watched this night beside thy tree, and the thief that steals the golden apples is no man but a bird of fire. In token whereof I bow before thee, and tender thee this shining plume plucked from her tail."

And Tsar Demyán, rejoicing, embraced his son. And from that hour forth, the golden apples grew unmolested, and the Tsar throve mightily, and ate without stint and slept from dusk to dawn.

But now his heart was filled with a great longing for the bird of fire, and he summoned his elder sons before him and he said: "My children, ye are now grown to the full blooming of your strength, and it is meet that ye should know my people and be



But ere she loosed his hold, Ivan Tsarevitch had plucked from her shining tail a single plume.

known to them. Go forth then into the white world, and with my blessing and the help of God, win glory for your names, and seek for me the wondrous bird of fire whose plumage lights the earth. He that performs this task shall have the half of all my tsardom while I live, half when I die."

And they bowed down before the Tsar, nor tarried long, but fared forth into the white world.

And presently Ivan Tsarevitch sought audience of his father, saying: "Great Tsar and Sire, Demyán Danílovitch, I beg thy leave to follow in my brothers' wake, for it is meet that I should know thy people and be known to them. Give me thy blessing and, with the help of God, I will win glory for my name, and seek for thee the wondrous bird of fire."

And the Tsar replied: "Thou art too young, my son, and thy strength is as the strength of a green sapling that bows before the storm. Tarry a little, for thy time will come, but now forsake me not. I am full of years, and if an evil chance should rob me of thy brothers, who would rule over my tsardom and my people?"

But Ivan Tsarevitch would not be denied,

and in the end the Tsar must needs yield him his blessing, and so he fared forth into the white world.

And journeying, he came to a crossroad that led in three directions. And he beheld a pillar with these words: "He that goes on shall suffer cold and hunger. He that turns right shall perish, but his steed shall live. He that turns left shall lose his steed, but he shall be preserved." And Ivan Tsarevitch turned to the left and journeyed farther.

And ere he had gone the length of a field of grain, a gray wolf sprang from the thicket, and pounced upon his steed and slew him and went his way. And Ivan Tsarevitch bowed his head in sorrow and fared farther.

But in a moment the gray wolf appeared again before him and spoke in a human voice.

"I grieve for thee, Ivan Tsarevitch, and for thy hapless steed. Yet thou didst read the word of destiny and must abide the issue of thy choice. But now take comfort, for I will be thy steed and yield thee faithful service. Mount thou upon my back, and tell me whither thou art bound, and to what end."

And Ivan Tsarevitch mounted on the gray wolf's back and said: "I seek the bird of fire."

And the gray wolf replied: "With the Lord's help I will bring thee where she is." And he set forth, and his flight was swifter than the flight of eagles.

And at midnight they paused before a wall of stone, and the gray wolf said: "Beyond the wall the bird of fire sits in her golden cage. Go softly, and bring her hither! But beware! Lay not thy hand upon the golden cage, lest disaster follow!"

And Ivan Tsarevitch scaled the wall, and he beheld the bird of fire in her golden cage, and all the garden was lighted by her plumage as by the noonday sun. And he drew her forth and would have fled again, but suddenly bethought himself and said: "How shall I bear her to my father's tsardom?" And the gray wolf's wise counsel was forgotten, and he laid hold upon the golden cage.

And, touching it, he heard a sound as of the humming of golden harpstrings, and two sturdy guardsmen seized him on either hand, and led him before the Tsar whose name was called Afrón.

And Afrón said: “Whence and who art thou?”

And he answered: “Ivan Tsarevitch, son of the noble Tsar Demyán Danílovitch, who rules in wisdom over his far-flung lands. Thy bird of fire hath come at night into my father’s garden, and plucked the golden apples from his tree. Wherefore I am come hither to take her captive.”

And Afrón answered: “Whether thou be indeed Ivan Tsarevitch, son of the Tsar Demyán Danílovitch, I know not. But this I know—thou art engaged as ill becomes a prince. Hadst thou come open-heartedly and said: ‘Give me the bird of fire, Tsar Afrón,’ freely I would have yielded her to thee, out of the love I bear the Tsar thy father. But now thou shalt be named a thief and villain, and all the world shall ring with thy dishonor. Yet stay! If thou wilt journey beyond thrice ten tsardoms to the land of Tsar Kasím, and bring me thence his daughter, whom men call Helen the Fair, I will have mercy on thee, and give thee in return the bird of fire.”

And Ivan Tsarevitch bowed his head in shame, and went where the gray wolf awaited him.

And the gray wolf said: "I love thee well, Ivan Tsarevitch, else hadst thou found awaiting thee naught but my smell. Yet to upbraid thee will not undo thy folly. Mount on my back, and with God's help I will bear thee to the land of Tsar Kasim. Once there, thou shalt remain without, and I will enter and perform thy task." And he set forth, and his flight was swifter than the flight of sea-gulls.

And at midday they reached the land of Tsar Kasim, and the gray wolf said: "The garden of the Tsar lies near at hand. Do thou await me under this green oak until I come again."

And so he leaped over the garden wall, and hid beneath the hedge, and bided there the hour when Helen and her maids should walk abroad.

And in the cool of day they came, Helen the Fair, daughter of Tsar Kasim, and all her rosy maidens, and all her train of nurses and attendants. And they strolled in the garden paths, and tossed their colored balls, and their laughter pealed like the peal of silver bells, and all the air was joyous with their cries.

And the gray wolf kept watch and saw

that Helen, wearying of her play, sat idle, and he sprang forth from underneath the hedge and seized her and flung her on his back, and God gave to his limbs the swiftness of the wind.

But in the garden a wild outcry burst from the rosy maidens and from the nurses and attendants, and out of the palace rushed the ministers and courtiers and boyars, and at their head was the great Tsar Kasim. And when he heard that a gray wolf had seized his daughter, he bade his huntsmen call their hounds and hasten in pursuit. But though they hunted for nine days and nights, they could not find the track of the gray wolf. And Tsar Kasim mourned for the loss of Helen the Beautiful.

But the gray wolf sped onward while the maiden, swooning in terror, lay motionless against the prince's breast. And presently her white lids fluttered, and her cheeks were stained with the faint bloom that steals upon the eastern sky at dawn. And in the end she opened wide her eyes and fixed them upon Ivan Tsarevitch, and all her countenance glowed like a flower. And so great was the love each bore the other, that it cannot be told in a tale nor written down with a pen.

And anguish tore at the heart of Ivan Tsarevitch, and he thought: "How shall I yield her up to Tsar Afrón?"

And the gray wolf read his sorrow, and made reply: "Thy tears are shed for naught, Ivan Tsarevitch, since that which thou dost fear I will frustrate. Nor is this service more than to gulp a rabbit. Hereafter there shall be a graver task."

And having reached the tsardom of Afrón, he said: "I will transform myself into a maid and thou shalt bear me to the Tsar Afrón. When thou hast taken in return the bird of fire, do thou depart and with thy bride await my coming in the secret place I shall reveal to thee. I will not tarry long, nor will the hours lie heavy on you twain."

And the gray wolf revealed the secret place, then struck the earth and was transformed into a beauteous maid. And Ivan Tsarevitch bore her to the palace and gave her into the hands of Tsar Afrón, and in return he took the bird of fire and went to the secret place where Helen the Beautiful awaited him.

And Tsar Afrón commanded that the church be decked and the nuptial feast prepared, for he would wed straightway with

his fair bride. But when he would have kissed her snowy brow, sharp bristles pierced his mouth, and his nose was seized in the grip of mighty jaws and, all affrighted, he beheld before him no beauteous maiden but a great gray wolf.

And the courtiers shouted: “After him! Seize him! Let him not escape!” But the gray wolf felled the Tsar with a blow from his tail, and plunged down the long hall and through the palace gates, and none could lay hold on him. And so he reached the place where Helen the Beautiful and Ivan Tsarevitch awaited his return.

And they mounted on his back, and swift as an arrow from the bow he sped, until they came to where the bones of the dead steed lay as they had been left.

And the gray wolf said: “Alas, Ivan Tsarevitch, we must part. I have given thee faithful service, and thou hast borne me valiant company. And though my years outnumber the shining stars, I will not forget thee, and that which was destroyed I will make whole.” And with these words he breathed upon the bones, and the gallant steed arose and pawed the earth.

And the gray wolf said: “Now mount thy

steed, and go with Helen the Beautiful and the bird of fire back to thy father's tsardom, and I will pray that no mishap o'ertake thee on the way. Trust none whom thou dost meet, nay, not thy brothers; and go with God." And the gray wolf vanished in the forest.

And Ivan Tsarevitch wept to see him go, then turned his steed and galloped homeward, and Helen the Beautiful rode before him and the bird of fire behind.

And from afar he saw the domes of his father's city, but in a meadow near at hand a tent was pitched, and from the tent his brothers issued forth and bade him welcome. And joyfully he clasped them in his arms, but envy like a creeping snake writhed in their hearts when they beheld the treasures he had won.

And they bade Ivan Tsarevitch enter the tent, that he might seek repose, and being weary, he entered in and laid him down and slumbered. And with their keen-edged swords his brothers slew him, and seized the bird of fire and the maid, and fled away. But Ivan Tsarevitch they flung into the mire, and his faithful steed lifted his head and cried aloud for succor.

And so the hours passed and the night fell, and a black raven with his fledgeling hovered above the prince's lifeless form. But when they would have lighted on his breast, from nowhere the gray wolf appeared and seized the elder raven by the tail.

And the raven sued for mercy, crying: "Release me, good gray wolf, and I will leave Ivan Tsarevitch unmolested in the mire."

And the gray wolf answered: "I will not release thee, save thou send thy fledgeling to bring me hither the waters of life and death."

And the raven called his fledgeling, and drew two flagons from beneath his wing and said: "Take thou these flagons, and fly with them beyond the utmost edge of the white world to the springs of life and death, and fill them and bring them here again." And the fledgeling spread his wings and flew away.

But his sire remained behind, and discoursed of the wonders he had seen, and all the treasures of his hidden lore he spread before the wolf. And the gray wolf marvelled at his wisdom, but did not loose his hold upon the tail, and crushed it ever and anon between his paws, as who should say:

“Thou art wise, black raven, yet for all thy wisdom, the gray wolf holds thee still.”

And the sun sank, and the night waxed and waned, and with the dawn the fledgeling came again, bearing beneath his wing the waters of life and death. And the gray wolf took the flagons and set the raven free, and with his fledgeling, he soared aloft into the sky and vanished.

And the gray wolf besprayed Ivan Tsarevitch with the water of death, and all his wounds were healed; and he besprayed him with the water of life, and Ivan Tsarevitch sprang to his feet and cried: “I have slept long, my brothers.”

“And longer hadst thou slept, Ivan Tsarevitch, save for my coming. For thy false brothers took thy life and left thee in the mire, but the gray wolf has made thee whole again. And he has served thee with all his cunning and with all his strength, but from this hour thou must serve thyself. Kostchei the Deathless has slain thy brothers and cast the spell of everlasting sleep upon thy father’s realm, and Helen the Beautiful and the bird of fire lie captive within his palace walls. He may not harm thy bride, for she is guarded by a potent spell. But only his

death can free her, and where his death lies hidden is known to Baba Yaga and to none beside. Then mount thy steed and journey to the east, and seek her in the ancient forest where no beast prowls nor any bird takes flight. Her dwelling is a hut on chickens' legs, her steed a mortar, and with a besom she sweeps from behind her the traces of her flight. May God protect thee and, if it be His will, I shall dance at thy bridal feast." And the gray wolf vanished in the forest, and Ivan Tsarevitch mounted his steed and journeyed to the east.

And he rode for a day and a second and a third, and came at sundown to the ancient forest and entered in. And the oaks and cedars towered to the sky, but no bird stirred in their branches, no beast prowled in their shade, nor any insect crept among their roots. And the leaves hung motionless on the still air, and only the hoofbeats of the flying steed troubled the silence.

And Ivan Tsarevitch drew rein before the hut that turned on chickens' legs, and cried aloud: "Stand with thy back to the forest, hut, thy face to me!" And the hut obeyed, and stood with its back to the forest and its face to Ivan Tsarevitch, and he dismounted



and bowed in greeting upon the threshold and entered in. And the Baba Yaga lay on the floor of her hut, and her feet were thrust into the chimney-place.

And she heard the sound of his footfall, and she said: "I smell a Russian smell, and this is strange, for until now no soul hath found his way into my forest, no beast stirred in the thicket, nor bird among the trees. What brings thee hither, Russian? Dost thou come gladly or does sorrow drive thee?"

And Ivan Tsarevitch was angered and he cried: "Fie on thee, foolish witch, is this thy

welcome? Give me to eat and drink, lead me to some soft couch that I may rest my weary limbs, and question me hereafter.”

And the Baba Yaga bathed and anointed him, and spread rich fare before him, and laid him to rest upon a silken couch. And she said: “Sleep, valiant hero, in peace beneath my roof. The morning is wiser than the night, and on the morrow I will counsel thee.”

And Ivan Tsarevitch prayed to the Lord and slept, nor wakened till the sun shone in the sky. And Baba Yaga stood at his side and said: “How can I serve thee?”

“I seek the death of the vile wizard, Kost-chei the Deathless.”

“Ech, young Tsarevitch, thou hast embarked upon a perilous task. Yet by my wisdom and the grace of God, thou shalt find what thou dost seek. To lend thee aid, I will bestow upon thee three treasures—a cap that renders invisible both man and beast, a cudgel that belabors its master’s foes, a cloth that will provide thee with food and drink. And now give ear.

“On an island that is called Buyán and lies in the midst of the sea, an old oak grows, beneath whose roots a coffer, bound with

iron bands, is buried deep. And in the cof-
fer sleeps a downy rabbit, and in the rabbit
lies a young gray duck, and in the duck an
egg is laid away, and in the egg is hidden
the death of great Kostchei the Deathless.
When thou hast found the egg, go to the pal-
ace at whose gates the dragon with twelve
heads keeps ceaseless watch. Draw not thy
sword against him, for no sword can slay
him, but don the cap and send the cudgel to
belabor him, and thou shalt see strange
things. Then scale the mountain, and in the
presence of Kostchei the Deathless, dash to
the ground the egg that holds his death, and
he will perish. Yet one task beside. The
dulcimer, that hangs upon the willow and
sings of itself, alone is potent to break the
charm cast by Kostchei upon thy father's
realm. Take it, and flee with Helen the
Beautiful and the bird of fire, nor pause till
thou have reached the mountain's foot.
And now farewell, and when thou hast
reached the end of all thy perils, think kindly
upon her who served thee with her cunning
and her strength."

And Ivan Tsarevitch gave thanks to Baba
Yaga and, mounting his steed, continued on
his journey. And presently the ancient

forest lay far behind him, and the blue sea before. And he espied a net, wherein a silver pike struggled to free herself, and when the pike beheld Ivan Tsarevitch, she cried in a human voice: "Kind youth, deliver me out of the net, and in the hour of need I will befriend thee." And so he freed her from the fisher's net and, flapping her tail in token of her thanks, she swam away.

And Ivan Tsarevitch guided his steed close to the water's edge, and the noble charger plunged into the waves, breasting their fury, nor wearied till he had brought his master to the island that is called Buyán and lies in the midst of the sea.

And Ivan Tsarevitch loosed him to feed in the green pasture, and went alone to where the old oak grew and shook it once. But the great tree stood fast. And again he shook it, and its branches groaned as though they wrestled with a mighty storm; and still again, and the oak fell crashing to the earth, while its upturn roots, like crawling serpents, spread over all the land.

And where the tree had stood, a chasm yawned, and in the chasm a coffer bound with iron bands lay buried deep. And Ivan Tsarevitch brought the coffer forth, and

shattered the bolt and seized the downy rabbit by the ears and rent him in twain. And the gray duck flew swiftly out to sea but, more swiftly still, Ivan Tsarevitch drew his bow and shot an arrow to the gray duck's heart. And, cackling, she let fall the egg that sank like a boulder underneath the waves, and Ivan Tsarevitch cried aloud in sorrow, for he knew not how to bring it forth again from the depths of the blue sea.

But lo! through the troubled waters, the silver pike flashed like a ray of light and vanished and re-appeared, and in her mouth she bore the egg wherein lay buried the death



of great Kostchei the Deathless. And she gave the egg into the Prince's hand and said: "In the hour of need, Ivan Tsarevitch, I have befriended thee," and flapping her tail, she swam far out to sea.

And he placed the egg within his bosom and mounted his steed, who plunged again into the ocean, and having brought his master safe to shore, sped onward to the land of Tsar Kostchei.

And whether the journey was little or long, they came at length to a high mountain, a palace on its summit, and at its foot great gates of iron that were guarded by a dragon with twelve heads. And six heads slept and six heads watched in turn, and the tongues spat black venom and flames burst from the throats, so that none, though he were the boldest in the realm, dared venture nigh. And the power of man availed not against him, for it was written that he should slay himself.

And Ivan Tsarevitch donned the magic cap that rendered invisible both man and beast, and crept upon the dragon, whose sleeping heads lay stretched upon the ground, while those that waked curled on



their twisting necks and looked all ways at once.

And Ivan Tsarevitch whispered to his cudgel: "Now to thy task, stout friend!" and the cudgel fell upon the dragon, and smote the heads that slept and those that waked. And the dragon leaped into the air and hissed and snorted, but to no avail, for still the cudgel bent to its task nor heeded aught beside. And the dragon ran up and down and lashed his tail and roared in agony, spitting black venom and hot fumes of rage and tearing at the earth. And still the cudgel

smote, nor hastened nor slackened its measured pace. And in the end, the dragon, consumed with fury, drove deep into his breast his bitter fangs and rent his flesh and, bellowing so that the mountain trembled, fell to the earth and perished.

And Ivan Tsarevitch bade the cudgel cease and, spreading his magic cloth upon the ground, he said: "Good cloth, comfort my weary steed with food and water till I come again," and shouldered his cudgel and set forth to scale the mountain. And the way was long and toilsome but, though his limbs grew heavy, he wearied not nor paused until he heard at last the sweet strains of the dulcimer that hung from a willow branch and played of itself.

And drawing near, he entered a garden where fountains plashed and peacocks spread their tails, and underneath the willow Helen the Beautiful bemoaned her lot. And Ivan Tsarevitch doffed his magic cap and stood before her. And her eyes grew big with joy, but when she would have fled to his embrace, he laid his hand in warning to his lips, and whispered: "I bring the death of great Kostchei the Deathless. When I have found him and meted out his doom, I will re-



Underneath the willow Helen the Beautiful bemoaned her lot.

turn to thee.” And he replaced the cap upon his head and went his way.

But now the wizard came to greet his captive, and spoke her fair and said: “Repine no longer, maiden, for thou hast seen thy bridegroom slain at his brothers’ hands, and thy tears will not restore him. Then yield thyself the bride of great Kostchei, and thou shalt live at ease and share the glory of his deathless name.”

And Ivan Tsarevitch, returning to the garden, heard his words and whispered to his cudgel: “Belabor him!” And the cudgel did his bidding, and smote Kostchei upon his back and shoulders, and smote his head and hands, until he rolled in anguish at Helen’s feet and howled for mercy.

But Ivan Tsarevitch cried: “Nay, beat him, brother, beat him without mercy! Thou thief and dog Kostchei, thou toad-faced monster, wilt thou steal maidens now and set a dragon with twelve heads to guard them? Or cast the charm of everlasting sleep upon my father’s realm? Beat him, good cudgel, for he hath wrought great evil! And though thou shouldst belabor him for thrice nine years, thou couldst not purge him of the half of all his sinning.”

And Kostchei cried: "Where and who art thou? Let me see thy face!" And Ivan Tsarevitch doffed his cap and looked upon Kostchei, then drew the egg forth from his bosom and dashed it to the ground. And the egg was shattered into many fragments, and Kostchei the Deathless turned on his back and perished.

And Ivan Tsarevitch embraced his bride and from its branch he took the dulcimer that played of itself. And so he left the garden, the cudgel on his back, Helen the Beautiful at his right hand and underneath his arm the bird of fire.

And they descended into the valley, and scarcely had they reached the mountain's foot when a mighty roaring sounded in their ears, as though the earth would rend itself in twain. And turning, they beheld the palace of Kostchei tottering on its height, and with a crash that echoed to the farthest edge of the white world, the mountain fell. And in its place, a lake of seething pitch spread its foul odors over all the land.

And Ivan Tsarevitch mounted his steed and Helen sat before him, and so they set forth on their homeward way. And when they hungered, the magic cloth served them

with meat and drink, and the dulcimer played for them when they were weary. And the bird of fire made the darkness bright, and at the portals of their tent the cudgel kept faithful watch.

And in this wise they journeyed until they reached the tsardom of the great Tsar Demyán Danílovitch. And when they crossed his border, they saw that all things slumbered, for here a peasant slept in his half-ploughed field behind his sleeping oxen, while in midair the whirling knout was checked ere it could fall. And there a knight dreamed on his dreaming steed, and the dust was a quiet cloud about his feet. And they rode through cities and through villages, and all were chained in the power of Kostchei's spell—men in their doorways, and black flies on the wall, and plumes of smoke that neither rose nor fell, but stood in rings above the chimney pots.

And so they came to the Tsar's city, at whose gates Ivan Tsarevitch beheld the bodies of his false brethren, slain by the wizard's hand. And they dismounted in the palace court, and passed the sleeping guard and entered in.

And the great Tsar Demyán Danílovitch

slept on his throne. And his courtiers, whose unseeing gaze was fixed upon their lord, surrounded him; while a minister stood open-mouthed before him, his honeyed phrases stilled upon his tongue.

And Ivan Tsarevitch approached the throne and cried: "Play, dulcimer!" And the dulcimer obeyed, and as its first notes sounded sweet and clear, the court awakened, and the courtiers fixed their gaze upon the Tsar, and the minister bowed down before him, uttering sage counsel.

But when the Tsar beheld Ivan Tsarevitch, he was as one bereft of sober wit. And, weeping, he embraced him, and hearkened to the tale of his adventures and wept again. But in the end he put aside his tears and, in the fulness of his joy, he trod a measure with his son's fair bride.

And guns were fired from the city walls, and bells pealed from the steeples, and heralds hastened up and down the land and cried: "Be it known to all his people that the great Tsar Demyán Danílovitch gives to his well-loved son, Ivan Tsarevitch, the half of all his kingdom while he lives, half when he dies. Moreover ye are bidden on the morrow—soldiers and merchants, beggars and

gentlefolk—ye rich and poor, ye low and high alike—to eat and make merry at the nuptial feast of Helen the Beautiful with Ivan Tsarevitch."

And on the morrow Ivan Tsarevitch was wedded with his bride, and all the courtiers saluted them, and the people thronged at the palace gates, and whirled and eddied like a stormy sea, and their clamor was as the clamor of mighty waters. And they cried: "Long life to Tsar Demyán Danílovitch! Long life to Ivan Tsarevitch and to his bride, Helen the Beautiful!"

And the magic cloth spread fruits and mead and many savory viands, and the guests ate and reveled in the streets. And the guards and sentinels were bidden to the feast, while the cudgel did service for them, belaboring so fiercely the thieves that would have pillaged the joyful city, that they thieved no more but walked in righteousness. And the dulcimer played melodies so sweet that none had heard their like, for they were as the song of birds at dawn and the music of running streams and the sound of winds that blow through a lonely forest.

And Tsar Demyán Danílovitch arose and raised his golden goblet, and silence fell up-

on the multitude. But ere he could shape the words he would have uttered, a blare of trumpets rang forth in the court, and a coach appeared, brave in gold trappings, attended by pages and outriders, and drawn by prancing steeds, who arched their necks and came to rest before the palace gate.

And Ivan Tsarevitch went forth to greet his guest, and lo! the gray wolf issued from the coach and clasped Ivan Tsarevitch in his arms. And he was garbed in splendor, with scarlet breeches and a velvet coat, a tasselled cap that tied with ribands underneath his chin, and a neckcloth of fine silk. And on his paws were gauntlets, and his tail was bound in a snood of silver, embellished with rare pearls. In this guise did the gray wolf appear, to pay his duty to the great Tsar Demyán Danílovitch, and dance at the nuptial feast of Helen the Beautiful with Ivan Tsarevitch.

And Ivan Tsarevitch led him before his father, who kissed him on either cheek. Then, arm in arm, they passed down the long hall, and the gray wolf saluted the wedding guests and made them compliments. And so mild was his bearing and gracious

his demeanor, that all were charmed who looked upon his face and heard his speech.

And so they feasted, and the gray wolf sat at the right hand of Ivan Tsarevitch. And when darkness fell, the wondrous plumage of the bird of fire lighted the city streets.

And on the morrow the gray wolf came to bid the Prince farewell, but Ivan Tsarevitch entreated him to share his fortune and take up his abode within the palace, vowing that he should be exalted in rank above the highest, and wear on his breast the ribands of all the noble orders of the land. And in the end Ivan Tsarevitch prevailed on the gray wolf to do his will, and the gray wolf, in token of his pledge, laid in the Prince's hand his hairy paw.

And so for many years they lived in joy, until the Tsar Demyán Danílovitch, having ruled long and gloriously, died, and Ivan Tsarevitch held sway over his broad domain. And Helen the Beautiful ruled at his side, and the Lord blessed them with stalwart sons and comely daughters, whom the gray wolf nursed. And he told them tales of knights and bogatírs, and taught them to ride swiftly and speak truth, and many things beside, meet for young hearts to know.

And he lived to a ripe age, and when
he died, he was mourned by young and old.
And in his papers was found a chronicle of
the adventures that had befallen him in the
depths of the great forest.

And from his chronicle this tale is told.



THE GOLDEN COCK



THE GOLDEN COCK

LONG ago, before the days of thy great grandsire or of his great grandsire, the illustrious Tsar Dadón ruled his tsardom and guarded it against the invasions of his enemy. And if any dared oppose him, he girt his shining sword about him and went forth into battle and fell upon him with so great a slaughter that none remained alive save only one, whom the Tsar spared that he might return to his country and bear with him the tale of the prowess of Dadón. So that all the neighboring rulers trembled at

his name, and all the princes and boyars acclaimed him and bowed down before him. And whatever affront he chose to put upon them, they must suffer it in silence.

But the years came and withered his arm and dulled his eye. His head grew heavy with the weight of his power and his shoulders drooped under their burden. Fain was he to abandon the rigors of warfare for ease and soft living, but his vigilant foes, biding their hour in the day of his strength, saw now that the day of his weakness was upon him. And straightway they assembled their armies and harried him upon all his borders, laying waste his lands and plundering his people and spreading desolation in their wake. And Dadón scourged his weary limbs to the attack, and multiplied his legions until their number was so great that none remained to till the soil or keep the vineyards, and a famine was over all the land.

And still he knew not how he should prevail over his adversary. For though his soldiers fought bravely and bravely perished, Dadón was confounded by the hordes of his enemy as a weary steed by the blows of a savage rider. Did he ride southward, swift

couriers hastened to him with the tidings that an armed force approached him from the west. Did he turn westward, a flourish of trumpets sounded the alarm in the east. And Dadón knew neither joy in the morning nor peace by night.

Wherefore he sent his criers up and down throughout the country, to proclaim to all that whoso should find a way to bring destruction upon the enemy of Dadón the Tsar, upon him would Dadón heap honors and a mountain of golden rubles.

And a day and a night passed, and a second day and a night, and on the evening of the third day an ancient sorcerer passed through the city and came before the throne of the Tsar. Black was his raiment, and white his beard as the breast of a swan. His face was withered as a dry leaf, and his eyes burned like coals in the gray ashes of a fire. And in his right hand he bore a bag, from whose depths he drew forth a golden cock and proffered it to Dadón, saying:

“Majesty, thy word hath traveled even to that dusty corner of the earth wherein thy servant plies his humble arts. Behold this golden cock that I have fashioned for thy need. Faithful is he and vigilant and bold.

Let him be set upon a pinnacle atop the loftiest dome of thy golden palace, and thou shalt need no other sentinel. For while thy foes lie harmless within their strongholds, he will rest motionless upon his height. But let the wind bear to him over the mountains the lightest breath of their approach, be it from the deserts of the west or from the southern seas or from the perfumed bazaars of the Orient, and my golden cock will ruffle his plumage, raise his crest and, turning in the direction whence danger threatens, cry ‘Kiri-ku-ku’ in tones so sweet and shrill that they must reach thine ears, O Majesty, though thou wert buried beneath the snows of fifty winters.”

And Dadón took up the golden cock into his hand and laughed with pleasure in him, saying:

“O sage and saviour of my tsardom, thou who hast served a prince shalt have a prince’s guerdon. A mountain of gold shall be thine and a river of silver. And whatsoever thy desire may be, either now or in the fulness of time, it shall be as my own desire and naught shall stay its fulfilment. This pledge do I pledge thee.”

“As for gold and silver, Sire, what need



"Behold this golden cock that I have fashioned for thy need!"

have I of these, who am content with black bread for my hunger and clear water for my thirst? And as for my desires, they are not as the desires of other men. Yet who can say what lies hidden in the stars? It may be that one day I shall return to redeem thy pledge." So saying, the sorcerer bowed his head thrice to the ground, turned and left the palace and was seen no more.

And the Tsar ordered that the golden cock be set upon a pinnacle atop the loftiest dome of his golden palace. And while his enemies lay harmless within their strongholds, the little cock slumbered upon his height. But with the first stir of strife, however distant and however secret, he awoke, ruffled his golden plumage, raised his golden crest and, turning in the direction whence danger threatened, cried: "Kiri-ku-ku! Kiri-ku-ku! Guard thy tsardom as I guard thy peace! Kiri-ku-koooo!" in tones so sweet and shrill that, whether he waked or slept, whether he walked in his garden or galloped afar in the chase, Dadón heard and led his legions against the enemy and mowed them down and scattered them to the four winds, so that his glory was proclaimed anew and none dared cross swords with him.



Thus did the golden cock keep watch over the tsardom of Dadón, and he arose in the morning with a quiet heart and with an untroubled spirit laid him down at nightfall. And peace dwelt upon his borders.

Thus passed three joyful years, and as the fourth year dawned Dadón lay one night in tranquil slumber. And it seemed to him that a faint far cry disturbed his rest, but so sweetly did he slumber that he gave it no heed, and did but sigh a piteous sigh and draw the purple coverlet closer about his head. And of a sudden a tumult arose in the city streets and drew nigh the palace walls



and grew in volume and in fury. And the Tsar awoke and cried: "Who dares disturb the slumber of Dadón the Tsar!"

And the voice of the commander of his army called to him: "Thou, O Tsar, father and defender of thy people, awake! Disaster is upon us. Awake, O Tsar, and look to thy tsardom!"

"Get ye back to your beds, ye foolish ones," cried Dadón, "and be at peace! Know ye not that the golden cock sleeps and no harm can come nigh you?"

"The golden cock wakes, Sire, and cries

to the west and thy people clamor to thee for protection.”

And Dadón looked from the window to where the golden cock kept watch on his lofty pinnacle. And he saw that the bird beat his wings in a very frenzy and turned ever toward the west. And even as he gazed, the cock raised his golden crest and cried: “Kiri-ku-ku! Kiri-ku-ku! Guard thy tsardom on the west! Kiri-ku-koooo!”

Thereupon the Tsar donned his royal crown and took his royal sceptre, and went forth from the palace. And he commanded that an army be assembled, at whose head he placed his elder son, known through the length and breadth of the land as Igor the Valiant. Him he kissed upon either cheek and bade godspeed, saying: “For the head of mine enemy half my kingdom.”

And Igor the Valiant answered: “Thine enemy is mine, O Sire and Tsar,” and mounted his steel-gray steed and rode away to the west. And his troops rode behind him. And the golden cock grew silent upon his pinnacle, and the Tsar’s people returned to their homes, and Dadón laid him down upon his royal couch and fell into tranquil slumber.

Thus passed eight days, and Dadón awaited tidings of the battle and of his son Igor. But though he gazed from his window until his eyes grew dim, no heralds approached from the west nor could he learn aught of what had befallen.

And suddenly the golden cock on his pinnacle awoke, ruffled his plumage, raised his crest and cried: "Kiri-ku-ku! Kiri-ku-ku! Guard thy tsardom on the west! Kiri-ku-kooooo!"

And again a murmur arose among the dwellers in the city and the murmur grew to a roar, and again they surrounded the palace of Dadón and prayed to him for protection.

Thereupon the Tsar commanded that a second army be assembled, outnumbering the army of Igor the Valiant by a thousand legions, and at its head he placed his younger son, known far and wide as Oleg the Beautiful. Him he kissed upon either cheek and bade godspeed, saying: "For the head of mine enemy half my kingdom."

And Oleg the Beautiful answered: "Thine enemy is mine, O Sire and Tsar," and mounted his milk-white steed and rode away to the west. And his troops rode behind him. And the golden cock grew silent upon



his pinnacle and the people returned to their homes, and Dadón slept.

Thus passed eight days, and Dadón watched the western sky for the first sight of the couriers of his son Oleg. But though he watched till his lids grew weary, there came neither courier nor any word from those who had gone forth to do battle with the Tsar's enemies.

And the heart of Dadón grew heavy with dread, and the people of Dadón crept away into hidden places, and when they went forth they went in terror. And suddenly the golden cock on his pinnacle awoke, ruffled



his plumage, raised his crest and cried: "Kiri-ku-ku! Kiri-ku-ku! Guard thy tsardom on the west! Kiri-ku-koooo!"

And now the Tsar commanded a third army to be assembled, outnumbering the armies of Igor the Valiant and of Oleg the Beautiful by countless legions, and he girt his shining sword about him and mounted his night-black steed and rode away to the west. And his troops rode behind him, and gray care rode by his side.

Onward they journeyed toward the setting sun, and the night fell and the dawn broke, and a second night and a second

dawn, and still they rode without let or pause. And though they scanned earth and sky to north and to south of them, they saw neither the pitched tents of their friends nor the burial mounds of their enemies nor any bloodscarred battlefields.

“Surely this is an omen,” thought Dadón, “but whether of good or evil who can tell me?”

Onward they journeyed through the dawn and the noon and the night. And the soldiers slept in their saddles and their horses stumbled for weariness. Seven days they journeyed and seven nights, and on the evening of the eighth day they came within sight of the purple hills and through a cleft in the hills they beheld a silken tent; and Dadón said: “It is the tent of mine enemy.” And over hills and valleys a deep silence lay.

And so they approached the cleft. And before it lay the body of one who had ridden with Igor the Valiant, and a great wound gaped in his side. And close by lay the body of one who had followed Oleg the Beautiful, and his head was struck from his shoulders. And Dadón looked about him and saw naught but the lifeless bodies of his soldiers

stretched out upon every hand, but his sons he saw not.

Then he drew his sword from its sheath and rode toward the silken tent of his enemy. But his steed trembled and would bear him no farther. And in the distance he beheld the steeds of his two sons and they galloped to and fro in their madness. But his sons he saw not.

Then he alighted and went on foot toward the silken tent and before its portal he paused. For there he saw his sons, their shields cast from them, and the naked blade of each was lodged in the heart of his brother.

And the Tsar flung himself upon the earth and rent his garments and lifted his voice in a loud lament, crying: "Woe, woe is me! Both my bright falcons snared in an evil net! Your death is mine, my sons, that should have lived to mourn for me!"

And all the hosts of his army wept with him, so that the very depths of the valleys trembled and the heart of the mountains was shaken with their cries.

And suddenly the portal of the tent was raised, and a maiden stepped forth whose beauty was as the beauty of the young dawn and of the radiant sun and of the shining

stars. And when the Tsar beheld her, he was as one bereft of the power of movement, and his heart grew quiet as a night bird at the break of day. And she smiled upon him, and straightway he forgot whence he had come or wherefore, and the memory of his two sons was strange to him. For this was she whose beauty blinded the sight of men and ravished their hearts, so that all dear and familiar things grew alien. And none could withstand the potency of her spell.

And she bowed her head before him and took his hand into her white hand, and led him into her tent. And she placed him before a table, laden with rare foods and crimson wines, and ministered unto him. And he looked into her eyes and said: "The tent of mine enemy have I sought, and found the tent of my belovèd."

And she smiled but spake no word, and anointed his limbs with fragrant oils and laid him to rest upon a couch of swansdown and covered him with a coverlet of cloth of gold. And she sat beside him, and played sweet music on a golden lute, and Dadón slumbered.

And for eight days he dwelt with her in her tent, and ate and drank plentifully and



*Her beauty was as the beauty of the young
dawn and of the radiant sun and of
the shining stars.*

slept softly, and knew not weariness nor regret. But on the evening of the eighth day he commanded that a chariot be brought, drawn by four stallions, and he said to the maiden: "Now shalt thou come with me to my golden palace which is eight days' journey from this place, and dwell with me there in love and joy as I have dwelt with thee in thy silken tent." And she stepped into the chariot and Dadón sat beside her, and her white hand lay in his as a bird in its nest.

In this wise did they journey, and came at length within a *vyerstá* of the city gates. And the people of Dadón came forth to meet them with shouting and revelry. For the tidings of what had befallen had gone before them, and the people rejoiced that the golden cock slept on his pinnacle, and that their Tsar who had ridden forth in peril had returned in safety, and with him a Tsarevna who was the most beautiful in all the tsardoms of the earth.

And the heart of Dadón grew big with pride, and he bowed to this side and to that and doffed his plumèd hat, returning the greetings of his people. And the maiden smiled upon them.

And suddenly the throng parted, and the

ancient sorcerer appeared before the chariot of the Tsar. Black was his raiment and white his beard as the breast of a swan. His face was withered as a dry leaf and his eyes burned like coals in the gray ashes of a fire.

And the Tsar greeted him, crying: "Health to thee, venerable father! And to the golden cock life without end! Peace hath he brought to my kingdom, and to mine arms my belovèd."

And the sorcerer bowed his head three times to the ground and answered: "Well for me, Majesty, that he hath found favor in thy sight. For I am come to redeem thy pledge. For the service of the golden cock thou didst swear that my desire should be as thy desire and naught should stay its fulfilment."

"It is the word of the Tsar."

"Give me then the maiden for my bride."

Then Dadón arose from his place, and his eyes flashed flame and his voice rolled like thunder behind the hills. And upon all the shouting multitude a deep silence fell.

"Thou fool and knave! What madness is this? What fiend of darkness hath seized upon thee to turn thy wisdom to folly and thine honor to shame?"

“It is thy word, Sire.”

“Yet have all things their measure, and the maid is not for thee.”

“So is the Tsar forsworn.”

“And were he twenty times forsworn, thou shouldst not have her. Gold is thine for the asking, more than ten men can carry—the rarest of wines from the royal store—the swiftest stallion from the stables of the Tsar—rank and honor and broad lands will I give thee even unto the half of my tsardom, and thou shalt be second to none save the Tsar alone.”

“My desire is for neither land nor riches, nor for honors nor swift steeds nor rare wines. My desire is for the maid. Do thou according to thy word and yield her up to me.”

Then did the Tsar’s wrath wax exceeding great, and he spat upon the garment of the ancient man and cried: “Begone from out my sight lest harm befall thee!”

But the sorcerer would not, and Dadón cried: “Let him be taken away!”

And two soldiers stepped forward, but when they would have seized him to bear him from the sight of the Tsar, their arms fell powerless to their sides.

And once again the sorcerer cried: “Thy word, Sire—” But the folly of him that would dispute with a monarch is greater than any other folly. For Dadón raised aloft his golden sceptre and smote the ancient man upon the brow, and he fell upon the ground and his black garments covered him and his spirit left his body.

Then did the Tsar’s people avert their eyes one from the other, for their spirits were troubled as by a foreboding of evil. And the heart of Dadón was heavy with the weight of his sin. But the maiden, who knew not good nor evil, parted her red lips and laughed long and merrily, and Dadón, listening, was comforted. So they journeyed into the city and the body of the ancient sorcerer lay by the wayside.

And as they neared the palace gates, there sounded a sudden whirring as of the beat of wings, and in the sight of all the multitude the golden cock flew from his pinnacle and lit upon the head of Tsar Dadón. And every eye was fixed on him but no hand was raised to succor him, for all were bound as by the power of some strange enchantment.

And the golden cock drove his beak once through the head of Dadón and cried:

"Kiri-ku-ku! Kiri-ku-ku! Evil on thy head as thou hast wrought evil! Kiri-ku-kooh!" and spread his golden wings and flew away beyond the knowledge and the sight of men.

But Dadón fell to the ground, groaned once and died.

And as for the maiden, she vanished like a dream that is done.

The dreamer awakes,
The shadow goes by,
The cock is a myth,
The tale is a lie.
Yet ponder it well,
Good maiden, good youth,
Though the tale be a lie,
Its teaching is truth.



ALL-WISE HELEN



ALL-WISE HELEN

IN ancient days, in a strange tsardom—but not in ours—a soldier stood guard at night by an old stone tower. Twenty paces forward he marched and twenty back, and saw naught save the starry sky over his head and the black earth under his feet. And the door of the tower was sealed with a brazen seal, and of what lay beyond he knew no more than thou.

But one night, in the ninth year of his watch, at the hour of midnight, he heard a great cry from within the tower and he

paused in his march and hearkened, and again he heard the cry and yet a third time. And he made the sign of the Lord and said: "God defend me from evil, who art thou that calls?"

"A demon that hath lain these thirty years in foul captivity."

"Why dost thou cry to me?"

"To break the seal, good youth, and set me free. Serve me in this, and I will be thy bondsman all thy days. If thou shouldst be in need, think but upon my name and I will do for thee what fiends may do."

And the soldier broke the brazen seal and opened wide the door, and the demon sped forth like the lightning from heaven and vanished in a whirlwind.

But the soldier repented him of his folly, thinking: "What I have done is ill done, for I have flung away mine honor at a fiend's asking, whom I am as like to see again as to see mine own ears. I will tarry here no longer, to be flogged through the ranks for a traitor, but take my good leave now while yet I may."

And the soldier cast sword and buckler from him, and went whither his eyes looked. He journeyed for a day and a second and a

third, and found neither food to feed his hunger nor water to slake his thirst.

And at length his weary limbs would bear him no farther, and he sank down by the wayside and bemoaned his lot.

“Search the four corners of the world, thou wilt not find a fool to equal me. Nine years I served in loyalty and faith, and had no care save to burnish my sword and eat what God in His wisdom provided. Now am I free and like to starve in my freedom. And this for thee, thou fiend of darkness, be thou forevermore accurst.”

And out of nowhere the demon appeared before him, and said: “Health to thee, soldier, and a good end. Why art thou downcast?”

“Shall I be merry that my strength is spent, or rejoice that I perish for lack of food?”

“ ‘Tis an ill soon mended,” and the demon darted to and fro and placed before the soldier meat and wine, and he ate and drank till for rich feasting he scarce could remember his name.

And the demon said, “If thou wilt serve a demon, go with me to my palace. There shalt thou feast from dawn to dusk and sleep on the feathers of a swan. Only this service

will I ask of thee—to guard my daughters and protect them from evil."

And the soldier said, "I will go with thee," and the demon bore him beneath his wing across thrice nine kingdoms and the thirtieth kingdom, and in the thirty-third a palace arose, and it was fashioned of black marble and its golden domes gleamed under the sun.

And the three fair daughters of the demon came forth to greet him. And the demon embraced them each in turn and said: "My children, I cannot bide with you to guard you from evil, for my duties summon me forth at all seasons. Take then this soldier to be your bodyguard and your protector. Comfort him with meat and drink, clothe him in fine garments and do all things according to his bidding, for he is a man of wisdom and hath served the Tsar."

And once more he embraced his daughters and flew abroad to find what mischief he could do. For a demon knows not peace, but prowls about the earth seeking whom he may confound and whom he may tempt from the path of righteousness to the path of sin.

But as for the soldier, the maidens drew him into the palace and brought clear water and bathed his hands, and laid him to rest on

a silken couch hung all about with glowing tapestries.

And so he lived in the palace of the demon, and the daughters of the demon did all things according to his bidding, and so sweetly did the days succeed one another that he would fain have lived thus for a thousand years.

But bitter follows upon sweet, and so it was that the heart of the soldier presently grew troubled, for he saw that each night when the moon was high, the three maidens left the house of their father and went forth and came not ere the dawn, but whither they went or to what end he knew not.

And he questioned them, saying: "Whither go ye each night when the moon is high?"

And they flouted him and mocked him and answered, "Whither we list."

And the soldier thought: "Is it so, my children? Then will I read this riddle by my wit."

And when night came he laid him down upon his couch and made as if to slumber, but slumbered not and bided there his hour. And when the moon was high he left his couch, stealing to the chamber where the maidens slept, and with his knife he made



an opening in the oaken door and knelt and peered within.

And he saw that they spread upon the ground a carpet of many colors and, clasping hand in hand, they trod upon it and straightway were transformed into white pigeons and beat their wings and flew into the night.

And the soldier gazed after them in wonder and thought: "What if I too should tread upon this carpet!"

And he entered the chamber and trod upon the carpet and straightway he became a yellow bird, and flew away through the



window and the three white pigeons flew before him.

And when they had journeyed neither a little way nor a long way, they reached a broad green meadow in the midst of which stood a golden throne. And from the four corners of the earth came great birds and small birds and all that lie between, and the heavens were dark with the beat of their wings. And the yellow bird sat in a juniper bush and peered forth with one eye.

And presently a light shone in the west, and grew brighter and ever brighter, and a golden chariot appeared drawn by four fiery

dragons, and a maiden sat therein and she was so fair as to shame the sun and the stars when they looked on her.

And she descended from her chariot and mounted the golden throne, and the birds fluttered about her and came to rest on her head and neck and shoulders, and a tiny fledgeling nestled in her bosom. And she taught them the ways of magic, and how they might circle the globe in the space of a heart-beat, and how restore life to the lifeless by the waters of healing.

And when the moon had set, she entered her chariot and was borne swiftly from sight. And the three white pigeons flew to the palace of the demon, and behind them flew the yellow bird.

And the pigeons struck the magic carpet with their rosy feet and became three beautiful maidens, and he that followed struck the carpet and was changed before their eyes into a goodly soldier.

And the maidens gazed in wonder and cried: "Whence comest thou?"

And he answered: "I come from a green meadow, where under the full moon a maiden fairer than the sun and stars teaches the ways of magic."

"Then art thou blessed beyond all other men, for none before hath seen what thou hast seen and lived to tell of it. Know this is Helen, potent in charms and mysteries, and had she looked into her book of wonders and learned of thy great daring, her dragons would have torn thee limb from limb and burned thee in the flame they breathe from out their nostrils. Therefore take heed, rash soldier, and if thy liking be still to wear thy head upon thy shoulders, go no more to that green meadow nor look again upon the face of All-wise Helen."

But the soldier's ears were sealed to the words of the maiden. And the day passed and the night came, and when the moon was high the yellow bird flew to the green meadow and sat again behind the juniper. And his eyes and his heart were filled with the beauty of Helen, and he could look neither to the right nor to the left but only upon her face. And when the moon set and she entered her chariot and was borne from sight, he flew out from the juniper bush and followed after.

And they came to the palace of Helen, whose walls were wrought with the wonders of magic and whose portals were guarded by

two black giants. And the giants bore her from the chariot through the halls of the palace to her lofty bedchamber, and laid her upon her silken couch and left her to slumber.

But in a green willow beneath her window, the yellow bird sat and sang so plaintively that her heart grew heavy with woe, and peace and sleep were driven from her side.

And she summoned her waiting-woman and said: "Go to the green willow and bring to me the little bird that sings beneath my window."

And the maiden placed a drop of honey on her lips that he might sip of it and called to him, but when she would have seized him in her hand he hopped from branch to branch and would not suffer her to take him.

And Helen left her chamber and went into the garden, and when she put forth her white hand the bird let fall his wings, and lay therein as in his mother's nest.

And she rejoiced in the love that the little bird bore her, and carried him to her chamber and placed him in a cage of gold and hung it in the window. And there he sang



*And when she put forth her white hand
the bird let fall his wings and lay
therein as in his mother's nest.*

so blithely that all his brethren, listening to his song, made answer from the garden and the field and all the air was sweet with the call of birds.

And when the moon was high, Helen was borne by her fiery dragons to the far green meadow and with the dawn she returned again to the palace. And she entered her chamber, and doffed her bodice of shining jewels, and lay down on her couch and slept.

And the bird gazed upon her beauty and thought: "Let me kiss the lips of my belovèd and if need be, die."

And he flew from the cage and struck the carpet at Helen's feet, and became a comely youth. And he kissed her lips that were fragrant as the honey of bees, and she flung her white arm above her head and cried as in a dream: "Let him beware who kisses Helen's lips."

But the folly of a lover is without reason, and as wide as the heavens and as deep as the deep blue sea, and he paid no heed to her cry but kissed her lips again, and again she flung her arm above her head and cried as in a dream: "Let him beware who kisses Helen's lips."

And yet a third time he kissed her on the lips, then struck the carpet and became a bird and flew into the cage.

And Helen awoke, crying: "What treachery is here?"

And she opened the book of wonders and found therein the words: "Ask of him whom thou hast warmed in thy hand, and cherished in thy heart, and harbored in thy chamber."

And she went to the cage and cried: "Come forth, vile bird, for I would see thee what thou art."

And the bird flew forth and struck the carpet and stood before her, a comely youth.

And Helen said: "Pray God He may forgive thy sins, but for this last thy head shall pay the cost."

And the soldier answered: "I am content."

Then the maiden clapped her hands and the black giants appeared, and she said: "Let the scaffold be built beneath my window, and let the headsman prepare himself to slay mine enemy."

And the scaffold was built, and the headsman stood beside it with his gleaming axe, and the soldier laid his neck upon the block. And Helen stood in her chamber window, holding a white kerchief in her hand, and

the headsman swung the axe above his head and waited for the signal.

But ere the kerchief fell from Helen's hand, the soldier cried: "Helen, a boon! A boon before I die!"

"What boon, rash youth?"

"To sing once more! Then let the axe descend!"

"Sing, then, but quickly!"

And the soldier sang. He sang of his love and of his sorrow, and so sweet was his song and so disconsolate that the heart of Helen grew as wax within her, and she could not choose but weep for pity and for grief. And the soldier finished his song and laid his neck again upon the block.

But Helen said: "I give thee for thy song ten golden hours, wherein to find some corner of the earth hidden from me and from my magic art. If thou succeed, then will I wed with thee. If not, thy doom is sealed forevermore."

And the soldier went forth from the garden and into the dense green forest, and sat him down upon a stone and bowed his head upon his hands and wept. And he thought: "Had I but left thee, evil spirit, to languish in thy tower!"

And straightway the demon stood before him, and said: "I come at thy call, little brother. Wherein can I serve thee?"

And the soldier answered: "In naught, save thou canst find that corner of the earth where Helen's magic art hath no avail."

"Who knows till he have tried?" And the demon struck the earth and became an eagle, and he said to the soldier: "Mount thou upon my back, and I will carry thee beyond the power of Helen's magic art."

And the soldier mounted on the eagle's back, and he soared aloft into the blue sky, and the earth was as a grain of dust and straightway was no more. And they mounted ever higher beyond the rainclouds and the clouds of storm, and five hours passed away.

And Helen opened her book of wonders, and laughed aloud and called to them, saying: "Mighty are thy wings, O lord of birds, but mightier the power of All-wise Helen. Fly down again! Thou canst not hide from me!"

And the eagle flew down to earth, and the soldier said: "How wilt thou help me now?"

And the demon smote him upon the thigh, and in the soldier's place there lay a pin and



*And the soldier mounted on the eagle's
back, and he soared aloft into the
blue sky.*

in the demon's sat a silken mouse. And the mouse seized the pin between his teeth, and sped through the halls of the palace and found the book of wonders and laid the pin between its magic leaves.

And five hours passed away, and Helen took the book of wonders and looked within. But all the leaves were silent and though she turned them back and forth, she found no aid nor any word of that for which she sought.

And a great rage seized upon her, and she flung the book upon the flames that leaped in the white stove, but the little pin fell from its pages and struck the ground and lo! the soldier stood before her.

And Helen the Beautiful laid her hand in his, and said: "Thou hast outwitted me, and won me to thy wife."

And they tarried not, but were wedded straightway and lived together in love until their days were ended.



RUSLÁN AND LYUDMILA



RUSLÁN AND LYUDMILA

IT is an ancient tale, a legend of bygone days.

In his lofty banqueting hall, in the midst of his stalwart sons, Vladímir the Prince arose and lifted his golden chalice, and cried in a voice of thunder: "I drink to Lyudmila the Fair and her noble bridegroom Ruslán."

And Lyudmila, daughter of Vladímir the Prince, sat with downcast glance as becomes a maid on her wedding day, and her bridegroom looked upon her with eyes of love.

And the wedding guests raised their silver cups and drank deep draughts of the foaming mead, and the cupbearers went proudly among them and bowed to the ground as they proffered the beakers of steaming ale. For our fathers were wont to feast at their ease, and joy glowed in their hearts as the red wine glowed at the goblet's rim. And their voices rose as the humming of bees in a hive.

But now the tumult was stilled and the bard of Vladímir the Prince plucked the sweet strings of his dulcimer and sang of Lyudmila, fairest among the daughters of men, and of the valiant knight Ruslán.

And at midnight the feast was ended and the boyars, heavy with wine, bowed to their lord and departed. And Ruslán and Lyudmila knelt at the feet of Vladímir the Prince and he blessed them, saying: "Peace unto you and all your seed, that ye may prosper and multiply!"

And Ruslán embraced his bride. But there came a trembling from out of the earth, and a thunderbolt shattered the stillness, and all the flaming tapers were quenched and black vapor filled the room. And thrice there sounded the cry of an alien voice, and in the darkness a presence soared aloft.

And Ruslán put forth his hand that he might embrace his belovèd, but his hand closed upon emptiness; and he called aloud upon her name, but answer from the silence came there none. Some unknown power had ravished her away.

And Ruslán sped from the chamber and leaped upon his steed and went forth in search of his bride. For a night and a day he journeyed and questioned all who crossed his path, but none could give him tidings of the maid. And his spirit grew faint within him and he cried: "Nevermore shall her beauty gladden my heart." And his hand fell from the reins and his steed wandered at will over the lonely steppes.

And at length he came to the mouth of a cavern, and out of the cavern a dim light shone. And Ruslán dismounted and entered in. And a taper burned before an icon and Finn the Sage pored on an ancient tome outspread before him. Clear were his eyes as a mountain pool, and on his brow lay peace.

And he smiled upon Ruslán, saying: "Thou art welcome, my son. Full twenty years have I dwelt in the gloom of my cavern, awaiting that day wherein thy coming was foretold to me. Mark now my words.



Lyudmila hath been ravished from thy side,
and thy bright spirit is shadowed with much
grieving. This is not well, Ruslán. The
evil hour will pass, and hope will guide thee
more surely than despair. Take heart, there-
fore. Armor thy soul in courage and go thy
way toward the bleak Midnight Hills. For
he that hath offended thee is Chernomor,
lord of the darkest night, that pounces like a
monstrous bird of prey on slumbering
maidens and bears them to his palace in the
hills. And no man may subdue him or do
him hurt save thou, Ruslán, if thou wilt
mould thy will unto thy fate."



And Ruslán knelt before the Sage and kissed his hand in joy and thankfulness, for his heart was eased of its burden. And he cried: "In all things will I do as thou hast bid. Give me thy blessing, father, ere I go."

And the ancient man blessed him, saying: "Good fortune light thy way!"

And Ruslán leaped to his saddle, and through dense forests and over dreary steppes he rode to the land of deep Midnight.

But what hath befallen Lyudmila since evil chance delivered her into the power of Chernomor? Borne aloft by a black whirl-

wind, the unhappy maiden swooned in terror, and knew naught of that swift journey but lay all through the night in deepest slumber, while the shadow of a strange dream troubled her rest.

And with the dawn she awakened, and her heart grew faint with fear and she cried aloud: "Where art thou, Ruslán, my husband?" And she looked about her, and saw that she lay among soft cushions beneath a silken canopy, all richly wrought with gold and precious gems that glowed as with a candle's living flame. And from the swinging censers the fragrance of sweet flowers breathed upon her.

But Lyudmila wept, saying: "Alas, what need have I of silken canopies or precious jewels, that am bereft of home and love alike?"

And now three maidens stood upon the threshold, all robed in gaily colored garments, and bowed before Lyudmila. And one, deft-fingered, plaited her shining hair and bound a fillet of pearls about her brow. And one arrayed her in a *sarafan*, blue as the morning sky, with silver shoes to deck her little feet. And the third girdled her

with jewels, and from some secret place soft melodies were played for her delight.

But neither pearls nor *sarafan* nor the sweet sound of music could bring Lyudmila comfort. And still she cast her eyes upon the ground, and spake no words to those that served her well. And so, their task fulfilled, they bowed and left her.

And she, in anguish pacing to and fro, halted before an iron-barred casement and looked upon the scene that spread itself before her weary eyes. Vast plains she saw, covered with snow as with a gleaming tapes-



try, and in the distance the mountains tow-
ered, snow-crowned and motionless, bound
in eternal stillness. She saw no friendly roof
nor traveler, nor heard the joyous blast of
huntsmen's horns. Only the wind howled
over the dreary waste, and shattered the leaf-
less trees that stood against the leaden sky's
far rim.

And Lyudmila cried: "Alack, what fear-
ful doom awaits me here?" and bowed her
head and wept.

And when she could weep no more, she
looked about her and lo! a silver door swung
wide and she passed through and entered an
enchanted garden, where gentle breezes
stirred the leaves of palm and laurel, and
golden apples were reflected in the clear
rivulets that ran below. And all the little
hills and valleys glowed with the fire of
spring, and from the quivering darkness of
a thicket a nightingale poured forth his voice
in song.

But neither palms nor golden apples nor
nightingale's sweet song could bring Lyud-
mila comfort.

And now she reached a slender bridge that
spanned a rushing torrent, and suddenly be-
thought herself how she might burst her

bonds and find release within the water's depths. Fearful, she gazed into them and beat her sorrowing breast, but plunged not in and crossed the bridge and wandered farther in the sunlight.

And presently she wearied and laid her down to rest upon a bank, and in a moment a tent spread its cool shelter over her and a rich feast was laid before her eyes and from the distant wood low music sounded. And she was sore perplexed and cried: "In a strange land, far from my dear Ruslán, why should Lyudmila live in this white world? Thy silken tents, vile Chernomor, thy songs and savory feasts are naught to me! Nor do I fear thine evil power! For I am Lyudmila, child of Vladímir the Prince, and know well how to die."

And, having spoken, she sat her down and feasted till her hunger was appeased; and when she had eaten her fill, the music ceased, and tent and banquet vanished from her sight.

And she wandered farther, and the night descended over the earth and she longed for slumber. And straightway she was lifted as on mighty pinions and borne through the still air and laid to rest upon her silken

couch. And the three maidens came, and loosed her girdle and silver shoes and *sarafan* of blue, and plucked the fillet from her shining hair, and bowed before her and departed.

And Lyudmila trembled, for it was as though the darkness stirred with some foul presence. And suddenly the door stood wide and all the gloom was lighted, and through the open portal a hundred blackamoors marched proudly, two and two, their naked sabres flashing, and in their arms they bore a silken cushion and on the cushion lay a beard so long as can be dreamed of only in a tale. And close upon the glory of the beard followed, with measured tread, an ill-formed dwarf and from his evil visage flowed the beard and on his shaven poll rested a lofty turban.

And he approached Lyudmila, but she leaped from her couch and struck the turban from his head and rent the air with cries so piercing shrill that all the blackamoors were deafened, and Chernomor turned pale and would have fled, but that he stumbled on his beard and fell and, rising, fell anew, and his black slaves clamored in fright and hastened to his aid, the while he struggled in the mazes

of his beard. And in the end they raised him up and bore him from the room. But for the turban, it lay forgotten there.

And when the morning lighted the eastern sky, the enchanted palace was sunk in quietness. And Chernomor, unturbaned on his couch, brooded upon his shame, while fifty blackamoors with anxious care drew combs of ivory through the billows of his beard, anointing it with spices and sweet oils. So that he presently took heart and, brave in his brocaded gown, stepped from his couch and went once more in search of his fair captive. But when he reached her chamber, she had vanished.

And in his palace were a thousand chambers, and through each one he cried for her in vain. And now he entered the enchanted garden, and sought her in the laurel grove and by the garden wall, along the lakes and underneath the bridge and where the waterfall played in the sun, but found her not nor any trace of her.

And now he loosed the vials of his wrath, and cried aloud so that the listening leaves trembled to hear.

“Hither, ye slaves, to me! On your heads be the guilt. Now seek her where ye will,

but find her out or, by my life, this beard will choke the breath from your black throats!"

But where is Lyudmila fled? Through the dark night she wept, mourning her fate and hard upon her tears followed her mirth, as she thought on Chernomor bewildered with his beard. And at daybreak she rose, and gazed disconsolate into a mirror that gazed in sorrow back. 'And, lifting the golden strands from her white shoulders, she plaited them and donned the *sarafan* of blue and wept afresh. And now she spied the turban of the wizard lost in flight, and placed it on her head for, decking her beauty, a maiden may forget the blackest grief. And now she set it upright and now aslant, and now she turned it back to front and lo! wonder of ancient wonders! Lyudmila had vanished in the mirror. Again she turned—and straightway reappeared! Again—and vanished as before! And still again—and looked upon her beauty in the mirror's depths! and laughed aloud and cried: "Glory to Chernomor and to his turban! Terror, depart from me and joy, return! Lyudmila is safe from harm!" And so she turned the turban back to front.

But let us cease to tell of beards and tur-

bans, the while Ruslán is left to his dark fate. Unscathed he journeyed through the wilderness and came forth on an open field, and his hot blood flowed swiftly in his veins, for here was an old battleground, bestrewn with bleaching bones and broken armor, a rusty shield upon a hillock and in a hollow mouldering saddlebags. And here a sword was clutched between dead fingers, and from a grass-grown helmet a rotting skull peered forth, and there a hero lay pinioned beneath the carcass of his steed; and over spears and battleaxes the quiet ivy wreathed its dusky leaves.

And Ruslán looked upon the field with troubled eyes and spake, saying: "Field, O field! Who hath bestrewn thee thus with mouldering bones? What steed is this that pawed the earth in the last battle heat? What hero hath found glory on thy breast? What prayers have sped hence to the unheeding skies? Thou art silent, field, and that which once quickened thy blood is covered with the mould of years long dead. So may Ruslán lie quiet ere the night, on some forgotten hill, where never the minstrel's song shall seek him out."

But now Ruslán bethought himself how

he did lack his sword, and spurred his steed across the darkening plain, and sought a blade, keen-edged and true, wherewith to slay his foe. And in the gathering night a hill rose up before him, and to Ruslán it was as though the strange hill breathed. And courage soared within him and he drew nigh, that he might grapple with this peril. But terror seized upon his faithful steed who trembled and stood fast, rearing his head, his silken mane all bristling with his fright.

And the golden moon rose up into the sky, and by her light a wonder stood revealed.

There on the hill's smooth slope, a living head cased in a plumèd helmet slumbered deep, and all the plumes were moving shadows, stirred by the monster's mighty breath. And Ruslán, guiding his timorous steed, circled about it, then pricked one nostril with his spear. Wide gaped the jaws, and over all the plain a mighty sneeze resounded, and a gale swept the field and sent dark clouds of earth whirling against the sky, and from the beetling brows and curling beard a flock of owls, hooting, flew up and vanished, and from the throat rumbled a voice like a rolling storm: "Unmannerly guest, sent by an unkind fate to harass me, begone! The



night is dark on hill and plain and I would sleep. Farewell!"

And Ruslán, disdainful, made reply: "And who art thou, that layest thy command upon Ruslán?"

"Away, bold knight! Go hence as thou hast come, lest I devour thee at one swift gulp!"

"Hold thou thy peace, thou prattling shallowpate! For thou dost bear true witness to the words our fathers spake, that a broad brow doth house but little wit."

And hearing these words, the monster blenched with rage, and fire flashed from

his eyes, and on his twitching lips lay flecks of foam, and from his throat issued a blast so fierce that Ruslán's trembling steed leaped high in fright, then plunged with downbent head through the black night and through the raging storm, the while Ruslán struggled in vain to curb him.

And the head rocked in mirth to see his plight, and mocked at him and cried: "Ho, prince! Ho, peerless knight! Whither away? Go softly, lest thou crack thy skull for naught! Nay, valiant hero, can it be that thou dost fear? Return, I prithee, that I may feel the strength of thy right arm ere thy good steed bear thee to lands unknown!"

And Ruslán answered naught, but hurled his spear at the offending tongue, and the spear pierced it and pinned it to the earth, and a bright stream of blood gushed from the wound. And now the giant in anguish and dismay mouthed at the iron, and all his insolence was fled. And Ruslán, drawing near, struck him a mighty blow that echoed far and wide and spattered all the ground with crimson foam. And the head reeled and tumbled down the slope, the plumèd helmet clattering by its side, and in the spot where it had lain but now, Ruslán beheld a

shining sword, keen-edged and true and fashioned to his need, and seized it and bore down upon his foe. But now a piteous moan assailed his ears, and his avenging arm dropped at his side and all his wrath melted away like ice beneath the noonday's burning sun, and he withdrew the spear from the giant's tongue.

And the giant cried: "Thou hast subdued me, prince; I am thy slave henceforth. Yet be thou great-hearted as thou art dauntless, for grievous is my fate. Long since I walked the earth, a knight like thee, and none could match me in valor or in skill. Happy my lot, save for my younger brother Chernomor—author of all my wrongs, shame of our race, a misbegotten dwarf born with a monstrous beard, who envied me my stature and my strength, and hated me with all his evil soul. And I was simple though of mighty girth, and he, a puny dwarf, was dowered with Satan's wisdom and his guile, and guarded by the power of his beard from every harm.

"And on a day he spoke to me in friendly wise: 'I have a suit, brother; deny me not. Deep delving in my books of magic lore, I have learned that far beyond the eastern

hills, beside a quiet sea, a sword lies hidden in a secret crypt. And it is written that by this sword we two shall perish. Thou, gallant brother, shalt lose thy head and I my magic beard. Let us take thought how we may find this sword and outwit destiny.'

"And I made answer: 'This is no riddle to be pondered long. We will set forth and seek the sword, though it be buried at the farthest edge of the white world.'

"And from the earth I plucked a pine tree for a staff, and set the dwarf upon my shoulder and journeyed with him to the distant land beyond the eastern hills, and all things came to pass according to the word of Chernomor. And with my staff I crushed the secret crypt and lo! the sword of fate glittered before us.

"And now our quest was ended, not so our strife. For neither was content to yield the sword into his brother's keeping. Three days and nights we wrangled, and at length the crafty dwarf put by his wrath and spake me soft and fair.

"Leave we our bitterness, good brother, for it is meet that thou and I should dwell in peace together. And for the sword, let fate resolve the riddle. Lay thou thine ear unto

earth's breast as I lay mine, and he that first shall hear the echo of her voice, his be the sword till death.'

"And Chernomor lay prone upon the earth and I beside him, and as I lay unheeding, he stole upon me and with the magic sword struck off my head from my white shoulders. And my body perished amid the dust of that far kingdom, but my living head, that may not die before I am avenged, was hither borne and left to guard the sword that now is thine.

"Go then, thou child of destiny, and if thou shouldst encounter Chernomor upon thy way, wreak thou my vengeance on him, that I may close my weary eyes in peace upon this world."

And so the head fell silent and Ruslán, spent with his wanderings, slumbered. And in the morning he awoke refreshed and, springing like an arrow to the saddle, journeyed farther.

And so the days sped by, and the leaves fluttered from the trees, and the wild storm wind whistled through the forest and stilled the song of birds, and winter came to greet the traveler. And ever he spurred onward to the north, and now an unclean spirit beck-



oned him and now a sorceress and now a giant, and now in the white radiance of the moon the river sprites, leaving their watery beds, swayed in the branches and lured him with enchantments to their arms. But Ruslán heeded naught and went his way, and heard in wind and tree Lyudmila's name.

And in the garden of the wicked dwarf Lyudmila wandered, unseen and unmolested, and saw as in a dream the walls of Kiev and her noble sire and the fair youth Ruslán. And by day and night the slaves of Chernomor went up and down, and sought for her and called upon her name.

And she mocked at their call, and in the shelter of a coppice doffed the turban and cried: "Hither! Come hither, ye that seek Lyudmila!" But when they hastened to her cry, Lyudmila had vanished as before.

And now they found her footprints in the dew, and now a swaying bough, but newly stripped of all its glowing fruit, or drops of water at the river's edge where she had knelt to drink. And when night fell, she hid herself within the friendly arms of birch or cedar and slumbered till the dawn, then rose and bathed in the cascade's clear stream. And Chernomor beheld one morning how an unseen hand scattered the shining drops and flung them high, and his wrath waxed exceeding great, and he resolved by cunning to ensnare the maid.

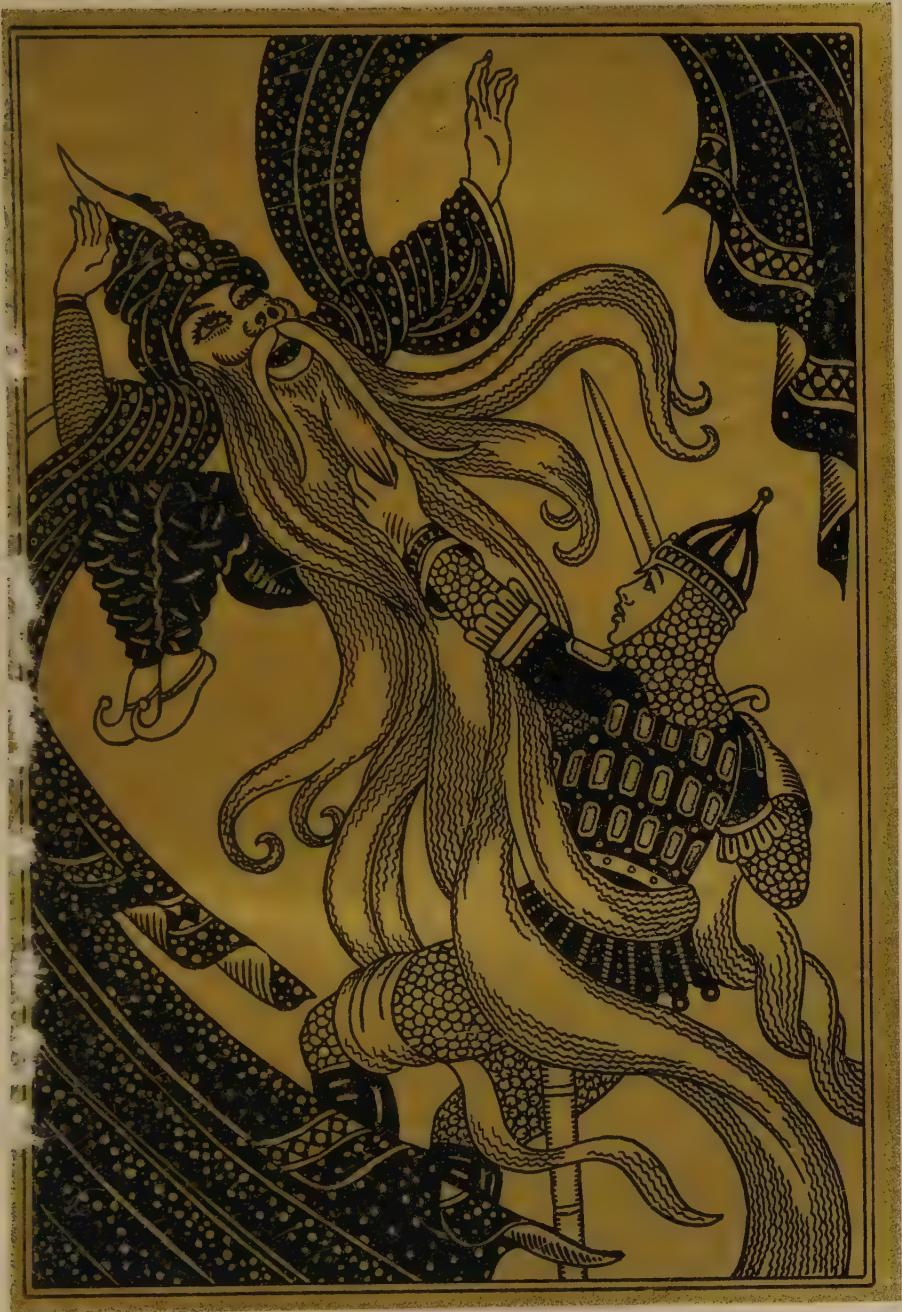
And when at noonday she sought the shade of a cool arbor, a voice whispered, "Lyudmila," and turning, she beheld her knight Ruslán. White were his lips and dim his eyes with pain, and in his thigh a crimson wound gaped wide. And she cried out: "Ruslán! My husband! What hath befallen thee?" And like an arrow to his side she sped and, weeping, she embraced him.

But in a moment she fluttered in the web flung over her by crafty Chernomor, and from her head the magic turban rolled, and so she lay discovered to his gaze. And he drew nigh and said: "Now art thou mine, Lyudmila!" And at his touch she sank into enchanted slumber.

And suddenly a bugle note rang loud and clear, and Chernomor replaced the turban on Lyudmila's head, that none might come upon her where she slept, and issued forth to meet his enemy.

And who was this that challenged Chernomor, filling his soul with dread? Who but the brave Ruslán, athirst for vengeance at the palace gate, and blowing on his bugle thundrous blasts the while his eager steed pawed at the snow?

And as he hearkened for Chernomor's reply, a blow descended like a bolt from heaven and, lifting his eyes, he saw how the magician circled above him, his cudgel raised to strike. And Ruslán crouched beneath his shield and swung his sword upon his enemy, but Chernomor flew upward, then down again so swiftly that he could not stay his flight, but plunged into the snow at Ruslán's feet.



*And Ruslán clung to his beard, nor
loosed his hold, though they passed
over forests and mountains and the
wide blue sea.*

And Ruslán leaped from his steed and grasped the sorcerer's beard, and Chernomor strove with him, crying aloud, yet all to no avail. And in the end he spurned the earth and soared aloft, and Ruslán clung to the beard nor loosed his hold, though they passed over trackless forests and over lofty mountains and the wide blue sea.

And at length the wizard, weary and spent, cried out: "Hear me, O knight! Thy courage pleases me and I will spare thee. Yet must thou swear—"

"Peace, Chernomor! I seal no covenant with Lyudmila's foe. And though thy power bear us to the utmost star of night, yet in the end this sword shall rob thee of thy beard and thou shalt be undone."

And fear cried at the heart of Chernomor, and mightily he strove to free his beard from Ruslán's grasp, but that lusty knight held fast his hold and ever and anon plucked from his groaning foe a silver hair.

And for two days they battled in the sky, and on the third day Chernomor cried out: "Enough, Ruslán! My strength is spent and I can fly no more. I yield myself thy captive, to do thy will in all things as it were my own."

And Ruslán answered: "Then bear me to Lyudmila!"

And Chernomor obeyed. But scarcely had they touched the earth, when Ruslán unsheathed his magic sword and severed at a blow the wizard's beard as it had been a single blade of grass, and taunted him, crying: "Traitor and thief! Where is thy glory now and where thy pride?" and bound the dishonored beard about his helmet, to witness his valor and the shame of Chernomor.

And now his charger came whinnying to his call, and Ruslán thrust the dwarf within his saddlebag and mounted swiftly to the palace gates. And all the slaves and sentinels bowed down before the beard that streamed like a banner from the victor's casque.

And Ruslán strode through the chambers of the palace, and came at length to the enchanted garden and sought Lyudmila in the laurel grove and by the garden wall, along the lakes and underneath the bridge and where the waterfall played in the sun, but found her not nor any trace of her. And terror seized upon him and his strength was doubled, and with his hands he tore apart huge boulders and uprooted trees and rent

the bridge asunder till all the smiling place lay waste before him. And brandishing his sword, he smote by chance the turban from Lyudmila's head, and looked upon her where she lay in deepest slumber. And he knelt by her side and called her name and loosed the web that bound her, but she slept and would not waken.

And to his ear there came the voice of Finn the Sage: "Be of good cheer, Ruslán. Take horse and journey homeward with thy bride. In Kiev shalt thou break the spell that binds her, and all thy sorrow shall be turned to joy."

And Ruslán bore Lyudmila from the garden and set forth on his way, and with him rode the dwarf imprisoned in his master's saddlebag. And so he journeyed over hill and dale and in the golden sunlight and by the moon's pale glow, and on her bridegroom's breast Lyudmila slept.

And when he reached the field where the giant's severed head watched for his coming, he checked his steed and cried: "Peace to thee, head! Thy wrong hath been avenged! Here in my saddlebag the traitor lies, shorn of his power and of his magic beard!" And

Ruslán seized the dwarf and drew him forth, revealing him unto his brother's gaze.

And the giant trembled and grew pale and would have poured the venom of his wrath upon his brother's head, but that his strength forsook him. And from his mouth flickered a dying flame, and so he closed his weary eyes in peace upon the world.

And Ruslán journeyed for two nights and days, and on the third night his gallant steed stumbled for weariness and so they halted for a space, and underneath the moon Ruslán kept watch above Lyudmila's slumber. Through the long night he watched, but ere the dawn his heavy head drooped on his breast and sleep sealed his eyes.

And now it chanced that the bold knight Farláf rode through the forest, and his startled gaze lighted upon Ruslán, dreaming and powerless at Lyudmila's feet. Swift he took counsel with his evil heart and crept upon him, lying unmindful of his peril or the shrill outcry of his faithful beast. And Farláf pierced him through and through, again and yet again, and seizing Lyudmila, fled in haste away. And Ruslán's wounds flowed with his crimson blood, and in the

end he lay bereft of life, and a black raven sat upon his shield.

But Farláf hastened onward with his prize, and saw the domes of Kiev from afar. And he drew nigh the walls and passed in triumph through the city streets, and all the people hailed him and cried: "Farláf the champion hath redeemed the Princess out of the hands of evil."

And Vladímir the Prince sat on his throne in the midst of his stalwart sons, and sorrow sat at his right hand. And presently there fell upon his ears the clamor of the people and into the council chamber strode Farláf, Lyudmila in his arms. And sorrow fled away and joy reigned in its stead. And the Prince descended from his throne to greet his daughter, that was restored to him. Gently he laid his hands upon her head and called in love upon Lyudmila's name but, heedless of hand and voice, the maiden slept.

And Farláf spoke: "In Murom's wood I found the maid entranced beneath the magic of the forest-king. I called him forth to combat, and thrice the sun rose on our clashing swords, and thrice the moon, but in the end he fell before my wrath. And still

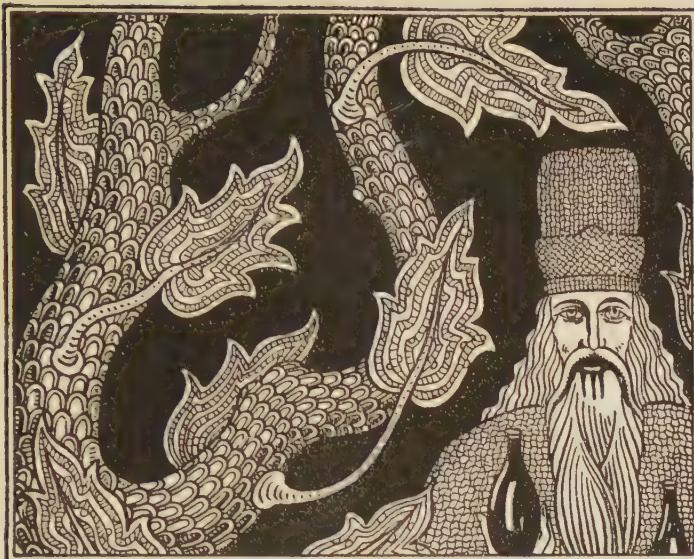
Lyudmila lay submissive to his will, and so I bore her homeward. Who may arouse her from this charmèd sleep I know not, but I claim her mine, O Prince, whom I have succored from an evil doom."

Then the Prince laid Lyudmila upon a couch of softest down, and summoned his trumpeters and all the bards and minstrels of his court and ordered them to pluck the strings of lute and dulcimer, and beat the tambour and the drum, and blow loud blasts upon the clarion. And through the palace the mighty din resounded and echoed in the farthest streets of Kiev. But Lyudmila slept.

And now, without the city walls, a beacon fire flamed and from his tower the sentinel beheld the tents of Kiev's enemy pitched in the field, and row on row of flashing swords and shields and armored knights galloping to and fro. And east and west he sounded the alarm that Kiev's ancient foe besieged her gates.

§

Beyond the highest mountain peak, where Russia's steppes lie burning in the sun, and even the mightiest sorceress dare not ven-



ture, two clear springs rise in an enchanted vale, and one is the spring of the water of life and one of the water of death. No zephyr stirs amid the branches of the timeless forest, no bird calls to his mate, no stag bends his bright neck to drink, but two shadows keep eternal watch above the hallowed waters.

Hither came Finn the Sage, in either hand a flask, and the shades fled before their master's coming. And one flask he filled with the water of life and one with the water of death and so he vanished, and reappeared straightway beside Ruslán and laved his

wounds, now with the water of death and all his body quickened and was whole; and now with the living water, and he leaped to his feet, and the warm blood coursed swiftly through his veins and all that had befallen him was as a heavy dream.

And Ruslán looked about him for Lyudmila and, seeing her not, he would have plunged affrighted into the wilderness in quest of her, but that the good Finn held him fast and would not let him go.

“My son, thy destiny is now fulfilled. Henceforward joy shall crown thee all thy days. In Kiev, when thou hast destroyed the enemy that storms her walls, do thou but touch this ring to Lyudmila’s brow and so release her from the wizard’s spell. Farewell and peace be thine, for Finn will come no more.”

So speaking, he vanished in a cloud of smoke, and Ruslán mounted his eager steed and galloped homeward.

And gloom hung above Kiev’s fair city as a hawk above a swallow’s nest, and the hungering folk bewailed their lot, but Vladímir the Prince sat by his daughter’s bier and spoke no word.

And with the dawn of day the hostile



*But lo! through the heathen line a
knight came riding.*

hordes surged from the hilltops and flooded all the valley and broke against the beleaguered walls. And the bugles called the warriors to combat and they went forth to meet the enemy.

And sword clashed upon sword and spear on spear, and the air was rent with the cries of man and beast; and here a lance shattered a foeman's breast, and there an arrow pierced the heart of Kiev's son, and yonder a frenzied steed trampled his rider. And the battle raged, but the victory was withheld alike from friend and foe. And when the night came down, they couched themselves upon their shields and slept, and with the dawn the bugles called them forth anew to combat, and sword clashed upon sword and spear on spear and the air was rent with the cries of man and beast.

But lo! through the heathen line a knight came riding, clad all in shining armor. And, raising the battle shout, he drew his sword forth from its scabbard and smote the infidel, and they fell before him as sheaves of wheat before the reaper's scythe. And like a tongue of flame he darted through the field, for now his bearded helmet topped a crest and twenty gory heads rolled at his feet,

and now his sword flashed at the battle's edge and where he struck a regiment was laid low.

And Kiev's knights rallied about his standard, restored in spirit and in strength renewed, and dealt destruction to the enemy and slaughtered all that had escaped the fury of Ruslán. And the poor remnant fled beyond the hills, leaving their glory on the battlefield.

And now Ruslán was led in triumph through the city streets, and all the populace acclaimed him and knelt to kiss the sword of might that had delivered them.

And Ruslán thundered at the palace gate but there was none to answer. And so he entered, and found Lyudmila lying in state upon her bier, and Vladímir mourned at her feet. And he approached the maid, and touched the ring of Finn the Sage to her fair brow. And she opened her eyes upon the countenance of her dear love, and Chernomor and all her woe were as a cloud that passes over a far mountain peak and vanishes from sight. And Ruslán clasped her to his breast and Vladímir the Prince, weeping for joy, embraced his children and blessed their happiness.

And Farláf cast himself at Ruslán's feet and sued for clemency. And Ruslán out of his abundant mercy forgave him his great sin.

And a feast was spread in the lofty banqueting hall and Chernomor, stript of his evil power, sat at Ruslán's left hand and drank red wine out of a silver goblet.

And the bard of Vladímir the Prince plucked the sweet strings of his dulcimer and sang of Lyudmila, fairest among the daughters of men and of the valiant knight Ruslán.

It is an ancient tale, a legend of bygone days.





SADKÓ THE MERCHANT



SADKÓ THE MERCHANT

LONG years ago, there dwelt in the free city of Nóvgorod a comely youth whose name was called Sadkó. And his purse was lean, and all his fortune lay in his curling locks and eyes of blue, and in his dulcimer of willow wood from whose golden strings he drew sweet melodies. For when a noble feasted, Sadkó was summoned to chant the ancient legends, and when a merchant gave his child in marriage, Sadkó made music that the bride might dance. And for his service, he had meat and drink

and a pallet of straw whereon to lay his head.

And the maidens mocked him for his threadbare tunic, and cried: “Wouldst thou dance, Sadkó? Then dance with the reeds that grow beside the river, for they will not mark thy rags.”

And each evening he was wont to walk on the banks of the River Volkhov, and sing her the songs he had made in praise of her beauty, and whisper to her waters: “There is no maiden in great Nóvgorod, beloved Volkhov, whose beauty can match thine.”

And so the years went by, and still Sadkó sang to the River Volkhov. And as he sat one evening on her shore, the white moon rose and silvered her gentle bosom, and in the pool of light a ripple broke, as when a stone is flung, and widened until at length a noble head appeared above the waters, green-eyed and bearded, and the beard dripped seaweed and shining crystals, and Sadkó knew that the great Tsar of the sea-ocean stood before him.

And the Tsar said: “I am well pleased with thee, Sadkó, and with the songs that thou hast sung beside my River Volkhov. And thou shalt have thy guerdon if thou wilt swear to visit me beneath the blue sea-ocean,



that my Tsaritza may hear the music of thy dulcimer."

And Sadkó answered: "I swear to visit thee, great Tsar, beneath the blue sea-ocean, that thy Tsaritza may hear the music of my dulcimer."

"Then cast yon fisher's net into the river and what it draws forth is my gift to thee." So saying, the Tsar sank beneath the waters and the ripples widened, as when a stone is flung, and vanished, and all the place was silent as a dream.

And Sadkó cast the net into the waters, and when he drew it forth, an oaken coffer

lay within its mesh. And, opening the coffer, he gazed in wonder at its treasure of gold and silver, of pearls and rubies and green emeralds that glowed like living flame beneath the moon.

And Sadkó went again into the city and bartered his fortune in the marketplace. And, trading with the merchants, his riches increased and multiplied from day to day. But still he walked at night beside the Volk-hov, and sang her praise, and whispered to the waters: "There is no maiden in great Nóvgorod, beloved Volkov, whose beauty can match thine." But the great Tsar of the sea-ocean came not again.

And for twelve years Sadkó sailed the sea-ocean and traded in far countries, and in the end he had amassed such treasure that none could traffic with him, and in the squares of Nóvgorod, he flaunted his wealth and cried: "Sadkó the merchant will buy your merchandise and all the merchandise of Nóvgorod, and load it upon his galleons and sail away. And if his wealth suffice not to purchase all, or his black galleons to carry all, ye have good leave to hang him in the public square."

And so he purchased all that men sell in

marts or hoard in treasure-chests, till naught remained that might be bought or sold. And he commanded his sailors to load the galleons, and when they had been loaded with all the merchandise of Nóvgorod, he cried: "Helmsmen, weigh anchor, unfurl your linen sails and put to sea!" And so the fleet of galleons sailed away, the proudest at their head, bearing Sadkó, merchant of Nóvgorod.

And they sailed for a day and a night, and a second day and a night, and on the evening of the third day they were becalmed in the midst of their sailing. And Sadkó cried: "Brothers, cast forth your plummets. Measure the deep and say if we be not grounded on hidden rocks or treacherous shoals of sand."

And the sailors did his bidding and measured the deep, but found no rocks nor treacherous shoals of sand.

And Sadkó summoned the helmsmen of his fleet, and ordered them and all their mariners to board his galleon. And when they were assembled before him, he said: "I would have you fill a measure with pure silver, one with red gold and one with matchless pearls and proffer them in Sadkó's name



to the great Tsar of the sea-ocean. For twelve years I have sailed upon his waters, nor paid him toll, and therefore is his wrath kindled against me."

And the sailors filled a measure with pure silver, one with red gold and one with matchless pearls and cast them into the waters. But the waters rejected them, and Sadkó said: "The Tsar demands no gold, but a human life. Bring hither then the trunk of a green pine, hew it asunder, and let each man write on its splintered parts his name and parentage."

And each man wrote his name on the pine

wood and cast it to the sea, and each man's name floated upon the waves like a white duck, but the name of Sadkó, merchant of Nóvgorod, sank down into the deep.

And Sadkó cried: "There is no virtue in the wood of pine. Bring me an oak and hew the trunk asunder, and let each man write down again his name and parentage."

And it was done according to his will, and all the names floated like swimming ducks upon the water, but the name of Sadkó, merchant of Nóvgorod, sank down into the deep.

And Sadkó cried once more: "There is no virtue in the wood of oak. Bring me a cypress hither: for our Lord lay stretched upon a cypress tree, and his hand hath blessed her wood."

And they brought the cypress and hewed the trunk asunder, and each man wrote his name upon the wood. And they cast their names into the water as Sadkó had commanded, and each name floated like a floating duck but the name of Sadkó, merchant of Nóvgorod, sank to the bottom like a weight of lead.

And Sadkó cried: "What cannot be averted must be met and Sadkó, merchant of Nóvgorod, will follow his name that cries

to him from the depths of the blue sea-ocean."

And he laid his cloak of ermine on his shoulders, and in his left hand bore the measures of matchless pearls and red gold and pure silver. And in his right he took the dulcimer, whose golden strings murmured of far-off lands.

And the sailors cast Sadkó into the waves, and the wind filled the sails and bore the galleons farther. But Sadkó sank to the bottom of the sea, past coral reefs and monsters of the deep, and here a dolphin glided, and there from behind the shelter of a rock a mermaid peered. And he saw at length a palace of green crystal with domes of jasper and gates of emerald.

And he entered in, and found the Tsar of the sea-ocean on his throne, and at his side the fair Tsaritza sat.

And he cried aloud: "Great Tsar of the sea-ocean, why hast thou summoned me?"

And the Tsar frowned in anger and replied: "Didst thou not swear beside the River Volkhov to visit me? Did I not give thee riches in return? For twelve long years thou hast sailed upon my waters, unmindful of thy vow. Now I have brought



*"Now I have brought thee here without
thy will, and thou shalt play until I
bid thee cease."*

thee here without thy will, and thou shalt play until I bid thee cease."

And Sadkó played upon his dulcimer and the Tsar's brow cleared as when the sun breaks on a somber sea. And he arose and placed his hands upon his mighty hips, and danced to the measure of the dulcimer. And he danced for an hour and a second and a third, and his steps were slow and gracious and his steps were swift and wild, but still he danced nor wearied while Sadkó played upon his dulcimer.

But when he had played three hours, the fair Tsaritza said: "I pray thee, break the dulcimer, Sadkó. Thou canst not know what peril lies therein, for if the Tsar danced in the open field, who would gainsay him? But the Tsar dances on the waves, Sadkó, and hurls them mountain high, and when he dances brave ships go down into the ocean's trough and seamen perish."

And Sadkó heeded her bēhest and broke the dulcimer of willow wood and rent the golden strings.

And the Tsar cried: "Play for me still, merchant of Nóvgorod! I would not have thee cease."

And Sadkó answered: "I can play no

more. The wood is shattered and the strings are rent, and only in great Nóvgorod can they be mended."

And so well pleased was the great Tsar with the music and the dance, that he looked with favor upon Sadkó and feasted him and gave him of the treasures that abound in the depths of the blue sea-ocean.

And in the end he said: "Wouldst thou wed, Sadkó?"

And Sadkó answered: "Yea, Majesty, but that I have no bride."

And he said: "I have many daughters, and since thou hast brought joy to their father's heart, thou shalt choose one among them for thy bride." And he went to summon them.

And the Tsaritza said: "Thou didst heed my wish, merchant of Nóvgorod; therefore will I counsel thee. Take not thy bride from the first bevy of fair maids that the Tsar brings before thee, nor from the second, and from the third lot choose no comely maid, milk-white and rosy-red, but if thou wouldst behold again the land of Russia and the bright sunlight, then fix thy choice on her that lingers, dark-skinned and low of stature, behind her sisters."

And the Tsar led in a bevy of fair maids

and said: "Choose from among them a bride to thy desire."

And Sadkó answered: "In all their number, comely though they be, I can find none to please me."

And the Tsar brought a second bevy, and bade Sadkó choose from among them a bride to his desire.

And Sadkó said: "In all their number, comely though they be, I can find none to please me."

And so the Tsar brought a third group of maidens before Sadkó and said: "Choose now, Sadkó, a bride to thy desire, for I have shown thee all my daughters and one shall be thy wife."

And Sadkó looked upon them as they went by, and laid his hand on her that lingered, dark-skinned and low of stature, behind her sisters, and said: "This maid is to my liking."

And the Tsar gave him the maiden to his bride and with her a dowry of pure silver, red gold and matchless pearls.

And Sadkó was led into a spacious chamber and laid to rest, and fell straightway into a heavy dream. And he awakened in the bright sunlight on the bank of the River

Volga, and all his treasure lay heaped about his feet but from his side the daughter of the great Tsar of the sea had vanished.

And so for twelve long years his ships plied up and down the Volga, favored by wind and tide. And he thrrove mightily and flourished and no ill fortune came to mar his peace.

But when twelve years had run their course, Sadkó was fain to look again upon great Nóvgorod and, casting bread and salt into the waters, he cried: "I fling thee tribute, Mother Volga, upon whose breast my ships have plied for twelve long years, favored by wind and tide. And I have thriven mightily and flourished, and no mischance has come to mar my peace. But now I would return to Nóvgorod, home of my youth."

And the river answered: "Go, worthy merchant, and where the tower soars at the city gate, bow to my brother Ilmen and bear him my greeting."

And Sadkó journeyed to Nóvgorod and when he came to where the tower soared at the city gate, he bowed before Lake Ilmen and he said: "Thou art mighty, Ilmen, and I bow before thee and greet thee in thy sis-



"This maid is to my liking."

ter Volga's name. And again I bow before thee in the name of Sadkó, merchant of Nóbgorod."

And a youth leaped upon the shore and cried: "I thank thee for thy greeting, friend, and would know how thou hast won the favor of the Volga."

And Sadkó made answer: "For twelve long years I have followed where she led, and sailed from her source to her mouth in Astrakhan, and she hath favored me with wind and tide, and I have paid her toll."

And the youth replied: "Go into Nóbgorod and return at night, bringing with thee three fishers and their nets. And let the fishers cast their nets into my waters, and for the love thou hast borne my sister I will requite thee."

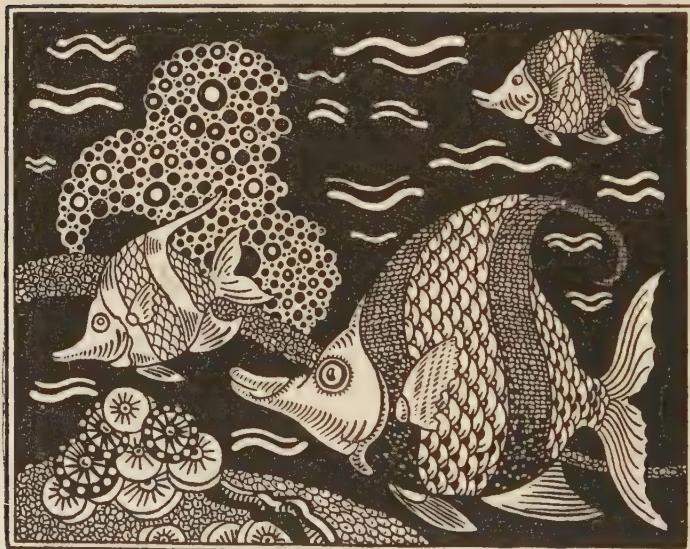
And Sadkó returned at night, bringing with him three fishers and their nets. And the fishers cast their nets into the lake, and the first net brought fish of pure white, the second of ruddy red, and the third net brought fish of many colors that glowed beneath the moon.

And Sadkó took the gift of Ilmen and buried it in vaults beneath the earth, and barred

it with bars of heavy iron, and set a sentinel to guard the treasure.

And for three days he left it unmolested, but on the evening of the fourth day he drew the bolts and opened wide the doors. And lo! the fish of pure white were changed to silver pieces, the fish of ruddy red were changed to gold, and the fish of many colors were matchless pearls that glowed beneath the moon.

And Sadkó stood beside the shore of Ilmen and, bowing low, he said: "I thank thee, father Ilmen, for the treasure of gold and silver and of matchless pearls."



And Ilmen answered: "It is well, Sadkó. Be happy in thy riches, and spread a feast for all the people of great Nóvgorod, that they may know the glory of their city."

And Sadkó did as Ilmen had commanded, and for three days and nights there was feasting in the streets of Nóvgorod. And Sadkó flaunted his wealth in the public square, and cried: "I have amassed such treasure, that in the space of three short days I will buy all the merchandise of Nóvgorod, and if my wealth sufficeth not to purchase all, ye may do with me according to your pleasure."

And for three days he trafficked with the merchants, and bought all that men sell in marts or hoard in treasure-chests, and on the evening of the third day he had bought all the merchandise of Nóvgorod, and yet his riches were greater than can be told.

And Sadkó, rich man of Nóvgorod, walked through the market-place, and in a hidden corner espied a heap of broken earthenware.

And, smiling, he asked the merchants: "Do ye sell the earthenware?"

And they answered: "Aye, Sadkó."

And Sadkó took the ware and gave them gold, and said: "It may be that children will

play with this earthenware and, as they play, will think upon Sadkó. And they will say: 'Rich was Sadkó, but richer Nóvgorod, in her store of treasure from lands beyond the sea; and rich as well in her broken earthenware.' "



KOSTCHEI THE
DEATHLESS



KOSTCHEI THE DEATHLESS

IN a tsardom that lies beyond the mountains and beyond the deep blue sea, there lived the great Tsar Berenday with a beard that fell to his knees. And he dwelt in joy with his beautiful wife for a year and a second and a third, and early and late he prayed to the Lord for a lusty son. But God in his wisdom denied him his prayer, and a shadow fell upon the brightness of his days.

And it chanced on a time that Berenday was summoned to the farthest corner of his

tsardom, there to subdue the enemy that harried his land. And for many moons he battled with the invaders, and in the end he vanquished them utterly, and smote from his shoulders the head of their chieftain and set it for an emblem on his spear. And so he journeyed homeward.

And riding under the noonday sun, his armor lay heavy on his limbs and his throat was parched with thirst. And he sent his soldiers up and down in quest of a cooling stream, but their quest was vain. And so he bade them pitch his tent, that he might find surcease from weariness in slumber, but slumber came not to his wooing, and Berenday arose and stood before the portals of his tent.

And lo! the earth that but a moment since had mocked his need, blossomed and brought forth a spring of living water. And Berenday approached it fearfully lest it should vanish as it came, and knelt down at the water's brink and saw floating upon its surface a jewelled goblet, and he thought: "God hath heard my prayer and sent water to slake my thirst, and a jewelled goblet that I may drink therefrom." And he stretched forth

his hand to take the cup, but it floated beyond his grasp.

And leaning far out above the pool, he strove now with this hand and now with that to seize the cup, but ever it danced before his eager fingers, and bowed and circled and paused as if to nestle in his palm, then floated once again beyond his reach.

And Berenday was sorely tried, for where hath it been told that a jewelled goblet should bid defiance to a mighty tsar? And, biding his time, he watched until the cup lay motionless upon the spring's clear breast, then flung himself upon it. And though his hand struck swiftly as a summer storm, the cup was swifter still, and plunged far down into the water's depths and rose again, floating serenely in his sight as who should say: "He that is thirsty, let him come and drink!"

"May the fiend that sired thee drink venom from thy lips, accursed cup! But as for me, I have no need of thee," said Berenday, and set his mouth to the cool water and drank his fill.

And having slaked his thirst, he would have stood upright, but what mischance was here? He could not move. Beneath the troubled waters, his noble beard was held in

a firm grasp and though he strove with all his hero's might to free himself, his strength availed him naught.

And, peering down, he saw a monstrous face, two eyes of emerald agleam with malice, a mouth distorted, and twisted talons entangled in his beard. And a harsh voice cried out: "Good Berenday, thou dost but spend thy strength to tug so fiercely, for till it pleases me to loose my hold thou art my prisoner."

"What is thy will of me?"

"I would have that, whereof unwittingly thou art possessed."

And Berenday bethought himself: "What peril in this pledge? Naught that is mine is hidden from my ken,"—and answered, "I am content."

And the voice made reply, "So be it then. But hold this pledge in memory, Berenday. For if thou break thy faith with me, then woe betide thee!"

And the strange monster vanished, but Berenday stood upright. And as a water-fowl, ruffling his plumage, scatters the crystal drops on every hand, so he besprayed his knights with water from his beard, and they all bowed before him to the ground.

And now he mounted his steed and rode at the head of his troops, and they continued their journey a little way and a long way, and came at length within sight of the city gates. And the joyous throngs came forth to greet the Tsar, and from the walls the guns fired salutes and all the bells pealed from the steeples to welcome Berenday, returned from war.

And he drew nigh the palace, and on the threshold his beloved wife awaited him, and at her right hand stood the chief boyar, upholding in his arms a silken cushion whereon a babe, bright as the crescent moon, stretched forth his arms and laughed to see the shining armor of his father-Tsar.

And Berenday recalled his pledge and thought: "May thy tongue wither, spirit of the stream, and thy bones rot within thee! This is the treasure whereof unwittingly I was possessed!" And he took up the child into his arms and fondled him, and bitter tears coursed down his cheeks while all the court looked on his grief amazed, but spoke no word.

And the Tsar sealed his care within his breast and ruled his kingdom wisely as before, but he knew neither sleep by night nor

peace of heart by day, biding the hour of doom.

And so the years were born and waxed and waned, and the young Tsarevitch bloomed in strength and beauty. And still there came no messenger of sorrow to Berenday, and in the end the Tsar put by his grief, saying: "It was a dream!"

And now Ivan Tsarevitch was a youth, of noble stature and of gracious mien. And on a summer's day, outstripping his companions in the chase, he found himself alone in a dense forest. And underneath his horse's feet strange blossoms flowered, and from the foliage wild creatures peered, but when he would have questioned them they vanished. And he rode onward, until at length he reached a clearing ringed with pines, and in the center grew a twisted oak. And a voice called: "Ivan Tsarevitch!" and from an opening in the tree a monster came, green-bearded and with eyes of emerald.

And he said: "Good Morrow to thee, son of Berenday! Long hast thou tarried, but the hour is come to claim that which is mine!"

"Who art thou?"

"In good time shalt thou learn. Bear now



my greeting to thy father-Tsar and say: ‘Thy debt to him that gave thee drink in the desert is due and overdue. If thou deny him, he will take by force what thou didst swear to give.’” And so he entered again into the oak that closed behind him, and the forest vanished and Ivan Tsarevitch, troubled in spirit, rode homeward.

And when he reached the palace, he sought out Berenday and bowed before him, saying: “My father, in a strange forest I met a monster, green-bearded and with eyes of emerald. He bade me bear his greeting and this word to thee: ‘Thy debt to him that gave

thee drink in the desert is due and overdue.
If thou deny him, he will take by force what
thou didst swear to give.’ ”

And the heart of the Tsar grew cold, and ashen his lips, as though the hand of Death had been laid upon him. And he clasped his son to his breast and cried in anguish: “It is the hour of doom, for thou hast spoken with him to whom long years ago I pledged thee by the honor of my word,” and he recounted to Ivan the tale of what had passed.

And the youth hearkened and replied: “Grieve not, my father, for this doom is not yet fallen. Give me a steed worthy to bear the son of Berenday, and I will set forth to redeem thy pledge. Bide thou in patience my return and guard the secret, that none in all the realm may know whither my steps are bent, nay, not my mother. And if I come not when a year hath passed, then count Ivan Tsarevitch with the dead.”

And so the Tsar accoutred him in golden armor, and buckled at his side a golden sword, and mounted him upon his swiftest steed, proud in its broidered trappings, and the Tsaritza hung about his neck a holy icon, blessed with her benediction and her tears.



*On the evening of the fourth day he came
to where a still pool mirrored the set-
ting sun.*

And they embraced him and sent him forth upon his journey.

And he rode for three days and for three nights, and on the evening of the fourth day he came to where a still pool mirrored the setting sun, and on its tender bosom lay the shadow of the green reeds that fringed its shores. And all the place was quiet as a dream.

And now Ivan Tsarevitch saw that thirty white swans glided where the tall reeds swayed gently to and fro, and each swan's head was decked with a golden crown. And then he spied upon the green, thirty white tunics lying side by side, and he alighted from his steed and crept through the tall grass and, seizing a tunic, concealed himself behind a hawthorn bush. And the swans frolicked in the pool, arching their necks, and with their soft wings scattering the spray, and when they wearied of their frolic they clambered to the shore and donned their tunics, and each swan was changed into a comely maid and went her way. But the last dared not venture forth, and stretched her neck to left and right in search of her vanished robe, making such piteous moan

that the heart of Ivan Tsarevitch melted within him and he went forth from behind the hawthorn bush, the tunic in his hand.

And the bird cried with a human voice: “Ivan Tsarevitch, give me back my tunic! And when thou hast need of service I will serve thee!”

And Ivan Tsarevitch restored the tunic, and the swan clambered forth and, donning it, was changed into a maid so fair as only a tale can tell. And casting her eyes upon the ground, she said: “I thank thee, good Tsarevitch! And know that thou hast served thyself in serving me. For I am Marya Tsarevna, the youngest daughter of Kostchei the Deathless, Tsar of the nether-world. Disguised as a green monster, he won thy father’s pledge to yield thee to his power, and he hath long awaited thee in wrath. Yet have no fear, but do as I shall bid thee. When thou art come into his presence, fall straightway to thy knees, and on thy knees crawl forward to the throne. Kostchei will rage and storm and call down imprecations on thy head, but heed him not. Go steadfast on thy way and mark what follows!” And Marya Tsarevna struck her white foot upon the earth, and the earth

opened and they sank down into the netherworld.

And there Ivan Tsarevitch saw the palace of Kostchei, fashioned of chrysoprase, with domes of jasper and of malachite, and it was brighter than the sun and all the netherworld was lit thereby.

And boldly Ivan Tsarevitch entered in to Kostchei, where he sat in splendor on his throne, green-bearded and with eyes of emerald, and hands like the talons of some monstrous bird. And straightway the youth fell down upon his knees, and on his knees crawled forward to the throne. And Kostchei stormed and raged and called down imprecations on his head, but the Tsarevitch heeded not his wrath and steadfast he continued on his way. And the eyes of the Tsar blazed with a baleful flame, and his fury shook the dome of the netherworld. But Ivan Tsarevitch thought upon the words of Marya, and crawled on his knees to the very steps of the throne and knelt before Kostchei. And when the Tsar beheld him at his feet, his anger was changed to merriment. And he spoke, saying: "Thou art welcome, Ivan Tsarevitch, to the netherworld. And though thy coming hath been long delayed,

we grant thee pardon since thou art come at length with laughter as thy gift. Yet for thine insolence thou shalt perform three tasks, and on the morrow the first shall be revealed to thee."

And two attendants led him into a spacious chamber, where all was laid in readiness as for an honored guest, and bowed in homage to the ground and so departed. And Ivan Tsarevitch, with a heart at ease, prayed to the Lord and slumbered till the dawn.

And on the morrow he went before Kostchei, and the Tsar cried: "Now shall the noble son of Berenday make manifest the greatness of his power. Ivan Tsarevitch, I would have thee build for me a palace, with domes of ivory and walls of marble and casements wrought of crystal purer than new fallen snow. And it shall be enclosed within a garden, fragrant with blossoms and the scent of bees, and silver fish shall dally in its pools. Build me this palace ere a new day dawn, and thou shalt win the favor of Kostchei. Fail, and by the beard that covers me, thy head shall expiate thy sire's fault!"

And Ivan Tsarevitch, heavy with thought, returned into his chamber. And he said:

“Be thou three times accurst, Kostchei, for thou hast dealt with me in evil wise!” and bowing his head upon his hand, he wept until the fall of night.

But now a golden bee hummed at the casement and beat her wings against the pane, and cried in a human voice: “Open, Ivan Tsarevitch, that I may enter!”

And Ivan Tsarevitch opened the casement, and the bee flew into the chamber and struck the ground, and Marya stood before him.

“Peace to thee, friend! Why art thou heavy as a thundercloud?”

“How should I be but heavy? Kostchei would have me build for him a palace, with domes of ivory and walls of marble and casements wrought of crystal purer than new fallen snow. And if this be not done ere the new day, thy sire will have my head. Therefore I weep, for I am loth to die.”

And Marya answered: “Grief shall be ours hereafter, but this is none. Morning brings wisdom that the night withholds, therefore pray God and lay thee down to rest. And with the dawn, arise and look from the casement, and thou shalt see the palace builded of marble and of ivory with

casements wrought of crystal purer than new fallen snow. Then with a mallet go up and down, and beat upon the beams and pilasters that Kostchei may know thee for the builder and praise thy skill.” And, striking her foot upon the ground, she turned into a bee and vanished.

And so it came to pass. Awakening with the dawn, Ivan Tsarevitch saw from his casement a palace, wrought in all things according to the word of Tsar Kostchei, so beautiful that never hath its like been told save in a tale. And with a mallet he beat upon the beams and pilasters, and Kostchei came and gazed with unbelieving eyes upon his labor, but in the end he needs must yield him praise.

“Truly thy hand is skilled in cunning, Prince, and happy for thee if thy head lag not behind. Thirty daughters have I, fair as a summer’s day, and on the morrow thou shalt scan their beauty, and passing before them three several times, thou shalt discover to me my youngest daughter, Marya Tsarevna. And if thou fail, thy head is forfeited.”

And Ivan Tsarevitch returned to his chamber, and peace was in his soul. “O

wise Kostchei," he thought, "how art thou trapped in the snare of thine own contriving! For though thy daughters numbered thirty score, what task to point her out whose beauty, more radiant than the sun, hath twice gladdened mine eyes?"

And a bright bee flew through the casement and struck the ground, and Marya stood before him, and she said: "The task is greater than thy reckoning, Prince, for Kostchei's daughters are matched alike in beauty, and none may know one from another save by some secret sign."

"Then teach me the sign, that I may know thee from thy sisters."

"Name thou that maiden Marya Tsarevna, upon whose cheek a midge will come to rest." And striking her foot upon the ground, she turned into a bee and vanished.

And on the morrow Ivan Tsarevitch went before Kostchei, and thirty maidens stood with downcast eyes before the throne and they were matched alike in beauty as leaves upon a tree, and none could tell one from another save by some secret sign.

And Kostchei said: "Prove me thy wit, Ivan Tsarevitch, and discover to me which of these maidens is my youngest daughter."



And he passed before them once and yet again, scanning their beauty well, but he beheld no sign whereby he might know Marya from her sisters. And a third time he passed, and saw how a midge lit gently on her cheek, whose tender rose deepened beneath its touch. And so he knelt before her and he said: "I greet thee, Marya, daughter of Kostchei."

And fury seized upon the Tsar, so that his emerald eyes were like to burst from his head, and he thundered: "Yea, thou hast found her out but never by thy simple wit, Tsarevitch! Yet let it pass, for thou shalt

not escape my vengeance though a hundred traitors play me false! Hear then my word! Return in three hours' time! We would drink deep of thy wisdom, honored guest! Here in my royal presence thou shalt set fire to a sheaf of wheat, and as it burns thou shalt fashion me boots of fine leather, broidered with blossoms delicate and rare, worthy of Kostchei's wearing. And if the flame be spent ere this is done, then shalt thou die!"

And Ivan Tsarevitch returned to his chamber, and his soul was consumed with wrath. And the bright bee awaited him and struck the ground, and Marya stood before him. And he said: "Thy sire breeds fancies as a salmon eggs. Now he would have me fashion boots of fine leather to deck his royal feet. I am no cobbler but the son of Berenday, and Kostchei's peer. And I will not stitch these boots though he should slay me for it."

"What wilt thou do?"

"Naught. But when Kostchei hath struck my head from my white shoulders, may three-score fiends harry him to his death!"

And Marya said: "Thou art my bridegroom and I thy bride, and with God's help I will deliver thee. Yet if it be decreed that

thou must die, Marya will perish with thee.
Now let us flee from here while yet we may."

And Marya breathed upon the casement, and her breath clung to the pane. And so, bolting the chamber door, they fled together out of the palace of Kostchei the Deathless.

And Marya touched the hand of her belovèd, and they were borne aloft into the green dome of the netherworld. And they struck against it and issued forth upon the meadow where the reed-fringed pool lay in the sunlight.

And there Ivan Tsarevitch beheld his steed that cropped the grass, awaiting his master's coming. And when he saw the Prince he whinnied in joy and galloped to his side. And Ivan leaped to the saddle and Marya sat behind him, and fleet as an arrow from the bow they sped away.

And in the palace of Kostchei three hours passed, and still Ivan Tsarevitch came not to do his bidding. And he sent a messenger who beat upon the bolted door and cried: "Why dost thou tarry when the Tsar commands?"

And the breath of Marya, clinging to the pane, answered: "I come anon!"

But still he came not, and again Kostchei

dispatched a messenger to summon him, and again the breath of Marya answered: "I come anon!"

And when he heard this word, Kostchei cried out: "Shatter the door and bring him before me, though ye fetter him with chains of iron!" But when they entered, they found the chamber abandoned of any living thing save Marya's breath.

And the rage of the Tsar was as a storm that kindles the heavens. "After them, slaves," he cried, "and hunt them down! Else shall ye hang together from the topmost branch of yonder oak!" And bowing thrice to the ground, they followed after Ivan Tsarevitch and his bride.

And Marya clung to Ivan who rode before her, and whispered: "I hear the beat of hoofs," and he dismounted and laid his ear to the earth and heard the clatter of hoof-beats hard upon them.

And Marya said: "There is no time to lose." And she transformed herself into a current of swift water, and Ivan Tsarevitch into a bridge that spanned the current, and the faithful steed became a crossroad that led to the left and to the right and to the setting sun.

And the couriers of Kostchei passed over



the bridge that spanned the running water, and halted at the crossroad, and the track of hoofprints led neither to the right nor to the left nor to the setting sun, but vanished utterly. And turning, they went back to the netherworld and told Kostchei all that had come to pass.

And Kostchei cried: "What bridge, what current and what road were these, blind fools that serve me to my sorrow! Let my steed be brought! Kostchei will match wits with the son of Berenday."

And Marya clung to Ivan who rode before her, and whispered: "I hear the beat of



hoofs, and the breath of my father's wrath is borne on the wind."

And he answered: "What though he overtake us? I will draw my golden sword against him and slay him."

"Nay, thou art one and he is served by many. Therefore give ear unto my counsel. Where yonder church spire rises to the sky, a hundred *vyorst* before us, the power of Kostchei is at an end. If we can but beguile him till we have crossed the border of his realm, we will be safe forever from his wrath. Give me the holy icon that hangs about thy neck."

And Ivan Tsarevitch took from his neck the holy icon blessed by his mother, and gave it in her hand. And she transformed herself into a church, and Ivan Tsarevitch into a beggar praying at its portal, and the faithful steed became a spire rising against the sky.

And Kostchei approached the beggar and he cried: "Ho, graybeard! Hast thou seen aught of Ivan Tsarevitch and my youngest daughter, who lately passed this way?"

And he answered: "Verily have I. For they dismounted at the portal and entered in, and prayed to the holy saints for comfort and for guidance. And they bade me burn a taper at the altar for the lost spirit of Kostchei the Deathless, and greet him in their name, if so be he should chance to come this way."

And Kostchei cried: "May the earth swallow them! May the mountains fall upon them and crush their bones to dust!" And in a frenzy he turned his steed toward home, and all his vassals followed at his heels. And when they reached the netherworld he bound them to an oak and lashed them with many scourges.

But Ivan Tsarevitch and his bride rode on

and crossed the border of Kostchei's domain, and were at peace.

And now they journeyed slowly, that their wearied steed might take his ease and in the dying light of day a city, fair to behold, appeared before their eyes. And Ivan Tsarevitch said: "Let us go in and look upon this city."

But Marya besought him, saying: "I pray thee, go not in. For my heart cries like a wounded bird within me and evil threatens."

"Nay, my belovèd, there is naught to fear. We will but enter, and look about us for a little space and so depart."

"To enter is no more than to move thy hand. But he that would go forth again must know the serpent's cunning. Yet, since thou art pleased to go, for three days as a white stone by the wayside I will await thee here. The ruler of the city will greet thee with fair words, and his wife and daughter will bow before thee, and a child with eyes like shining stars will take thee by the hand. All this is well, so thou dost not embrace the babe, Tsarevitch. But in that moment when thy lips touch his brow, thou wilt be bound fast in a magic spell, and Marya and all that hath befallen will be washed

from thy memory. Therefore be vigilant, heart of my heart, for if thou come not forth again, Marya will perish."

And Ivan Tsarevitch went into the city, and Marya transformed herself into a white stone and lay by the wayside. And a day passed and a second and a third but he came not forth again, for when the child with eyes like shining stars, as Marya had foretold, ran laughing to greet him, Ivan Tsarevitch could not withstand his beauty and kissed him on the brow. And in that moment, Marya and all that had befallen fled from his memory.

And the maiden, weeping, thought: "Ivan Tsarevitch hath forsaken me. Therefore will I grow as a blue larkspur on the high-road, that some wayfarer may crush me beneath his heel and tread me to the earth."

And as a larkspur she grew in beauty on the highroad, and dew like tears glittered upon her petals. And an old shepherd, passing at sunset, was gladdened by the sight, and plucked the blossom tenderly from the dark earth and bore it to his hut, and cherished it so that it grew apace.

And now in the shepherd's hut strange things befell. For when he woke at dawn,

his chamber was swept and garnished and when at evening he came from the field, his oven was alight and his table laid with food and drink as though to bid him welcome. And the old shepherd marvelled at this wonder, but in the end he grew disquieted and, seeking counsel of an ancient seeress, told her all that had chanced.

And she gave him a kerchief, saying: "Awake ere cockcrow and look about thy chamber. And that which is motionless, regard it not, but fling this kerchief over that which moves."

And the shepherd awoke ere cockcrow and looked about his chamber. And he saw the larkspur leave her stalk and flit hither and yon, sweeping and garnishing and laying all in order. And he flung the kerchief over her head, and she was changed into a beauteous maid.

And the maiden wrung her hands in grief, crying: "Old man, this is ill done. For I am Marya Tsarevna and my bridegroom, Ivan Tsarevitch, hath forsaken me."

And he answered: "Ivan Tsarevitch is plighted to the daughter of the Prince, and even now the wedding guests gather from far and near, and the feast is spread."

And Marya left the shepherd's hut and went into the city. And she entered the palace kitchen where confusion reigned, and a hundred cooks in snowy garments prepared the nuptial feast. And she approached the master cook and said: "Good friend, I crave a boon. I would bake for Ivan Tsarevitch a *pirushók* whose like hath not been seen in the white world."

And the master cook, harassed by many cares, would have berated her but that her voice was sweet as a flute that sings at dusk, and her smile more radiant than the sun, breaking through clouds.

And he answered: "A happy hour hath brought thee hither, maiden. Bake thou the *pirushók* and I myself will lay it before Ivan Tsarevitch."

And now the wedding feast was spread and the cook entered, bearing aloft a silver platter and the platter held a *pirushók*, whose like hath not been seen in the white world. And the cook laid it before Ivan Tsarevitch and he cut the *pirushók* and from its center two doves flew forth. And the one strutted on its rosy feet and the other, following after, cried in a piteous voice: "For-



*And he fled from the palace and at the
gate Marya awaited him.*

sake me not, I prithee, as Ivan Tsarevitch hath forsaken her whom he loved."

And the words of the dove shattered the spell whereby Ivan Tsarevitch had been bound, and he fled from the palace and at the gate Marya awaited him. And he embraced her and, mounting his faithful steed, they journeyed to the realm of Berenday nor paused for aught.

And there they were welcomed with tumult and rejoicing, and wedded ere the night. And Berenday lived long and happily and when he died Ivan Tsarevitch ruled in his stead and heeded the wise counsel of Marya, his wife.



WHITHER NO
ONE KNOWS



WHITHER NO ONE KNOWS

IN a far-off tsardom there lived a Tsar who had no wife. But he had a regiment of brave archers who hunted wild fowl to provide fresh meat for the Tsar's table. And the most skilful among them was Yuri, whose eye was so true and whose hand was so sure that the Tsar loved him above all his other archers.

And it happened one day that Yuri went hunting before the dawn and found himself in the heart of a dense forest, where there was no sound either of birdsong or the call of

beasts. And suddenly he caught sight of a turtle-dove on the topmost branch of a tree, and drew his bow and shot her to the ground. But when he would have picked her up that he might twist her neck, the bird broke into speech.

“Brave archer, do me no violence nor take from me my life in the white world, but place me in thy window and keep watch over me until my head begins to droop beneath my wing. Then strike me with the finger of thy right hand. Thus will good fortune come to thee.”

And he took the bird to his little house, and placed her in the window, and kept watch until her head began to droop beneath her wing. Then he struck her with the finger of his right hand, and she fell to the ground, and in her place there stood a maiden of such wondrous beauty as hath been heard of only in a tale. For if you were to search from land to land and across all the seas of the world, you would not find another so beautiful as this one. And she said to the archer: “By thy wit hast thou won me; by thy wit shalt thou learn how to live with me. Thou shalt be my husband and I thy wife. So it is written.”

And they were married and Yuri lived happily with his young wife. But he did not forget his service to the Tsar, and each morning before the dawn he went into the green forest with his bow and arrows to hunt wild game for the Tsar's table. And each evening he returned, wet and weary, and his wife, seeing this, was grieved.

"My husband," she said, "each day of the Lord takes thee through marshy places and into black forests, and each evening brings thee home spent with thy labors. What a sorry craft is thine! Heed thou my counsel. Bring me but a hundred rubles—or it may be



two—and thou shalt have gold in plenty, and ease from toil.”

And Yuri went from friend to friend, and took from one a ruble, and from another two, and in this manner he gathered two hundred rubles and brought them to his wife. And she bade him purchase therewith all manner of brave silks and fine embroideries. “And now,” she said, “pray God and go to thy rest. The morning is wiser than the evening.”

And the archer slept, and his wife stood on the balcony and opened her book of magic. And straightway there appeared before her two goodly youths who bowed to the ground and said: “Why hast thou summoned us? What is thy pleasure?”

“Take these silks and embroideries, and in an hour fashion me a carpet whose like cannot be found in the white world. Weave into it all this mighty kingdom, with its great cities and tiny villages, its purple mountains and its silver lakes lying under the sun.”

And they set to work, and not in an hour but in ten minutes—a thing which would astonish any one—the carpet was finished. And they gave it to the archer’s wife, and vanished as though they had never been.

And in the morning she said to her hus-

band: “Sell the carpet in the market place, and name no price, but take that which is offered thee.”

And Yuri opened the carpet and threw it over his arm and went forth to the market place, and a merchant hastened toward him, crying: “Ho, my good fellow, wilt thou sell the carpet?”

“I will.”

“At what price?”

“Thou art a merchant. Name thou the price.”

And the merchant clapped his hand to his head and pondered, but he could not set a price upon the carpet. And a second came and a third and a fourth, and soon a great crowd was gathered. And they all cried out in wonder at the beauty of the carpet, but none could name the price.

And the Tsar’s chief councillor came to the market place and, seeing a great crowd gathered, he stepped from his coach, and cried: “Health to you, merchants, venders and traders from across the seas! Why are ye gathered here and whereof do ye dispute?”

“Thus and thus,” they answered, “and in the end we cannot set a price upon the carpet.”

And the chief councillor marvelled at the beauty of the carpet. And he said: “Archer, speak truly. Whence hast thou this wondrous carpet?”

“From my wife.”

“What dost thou ask for it?”

“I know not. My wife bade me name no price, but take what was offered.”

“Here are ten thousand rubles.”

And the archer took the money, and gave the carpet to the councillor and went back to his wife.

Now this councillor was beloved of the Tsar, and ate and drank at his table, and when he went that evening to the palace, he took the carpet with him. And he said: “Be pleased to look upon this wonder, that today I purchased in the market place.”

And the Tsar looked and saw all his mighty kingdom stretched out before him, with its great cities and tiny villages, its purple mountains and its silver lakes lying under the sun, as though they lay in the hollow of his hand.

And he was well pleased and cried: “In all my days I have never beheld such cunning! Take what thou wilt as guerdon, councillor; the carpet is the Tsar’s.” And

he gave the councillor five and twenty thousand rubles; and as for the carpet, he hung it on the wall of his bedchamber.

And the chief councillor thought: "I will buy me a better carpet." And he mounted his horse and rode over the hills and valleys, until he came to the little house of the archer. But when he saw the archer's beautiful wife, he straightway forgot who he was and why he had ridden so swiftly. For so great was her beauty that he could not take his eyes from her face, and would gladly have stood and gazed on her for a hundred years and a day. And he thought: "Where has it ever been seen or heard that a simple archer should own such a treasure? I am a noble Prince and walk at the Tsar's right hand, yet until now I have never beheld such beauty!"

And at length he gathered his wits together and wandered homeward. And from that time forth, he bore himself as one in a dream and, sleeping or waking, he thought of none save the beautiful wife of the archer. And though he ate and drank, he knew not whereof, for his hunger and thirst were all for the beautiful wife of the archer.

And presently the Tsar took note of his chief councillor's distraction, and ques-

tioned him, saying : “Why art thou troubled? What grief oppresses thee?”

And he answered: “Majesty, I have looked upon the archer’s wife, and neither food nor drink nor magic potions can bring me peace.”

And the Tsar was curious to see such beauty, and ordered his coach to take him to the little house of the archer. And the archer’s wife sat at her loom, and she was more radiant than the sun, more lustrous than the moon, and whosoever looked upon her, be he young or old, a serf in his hut or a tsar upon his throne, he must kneel down and pay her homage.

And the Tsar’s heart grew big with love and he thought: “Why do I remain unwed, when I might win this woman to my wife? What though she be the archer’s! Her beauty was fashioned for the Tsar alone.”

And he returned to his palace and summoned his chief councillor, and said: “Thou hast shown me the beauty of the archer’s wife. Rid me now of her husband. If thou fail me in this, though thou wert twenty times my faithful servant, still shouldst thou hang from the tallest gallows-tree.”

And the chief councillor went forth from

the Tsar's presence and his heart was heavy within him, for he knew not how he should rid the Tsar of Yuri the archer. And he passed through noisy thoroughfares and across the silent steppes, and out came the Baba Yaga, mounted upon Svinka the pig, and greeted him.

"Hail, thou servant of the Tsar! I see thy heart and its burden. The Tsar hath ordered thee to rid him of Yuri the archer. This is soon done, for he is a simple soul. And though his wife be full of guile, yet will we set her a task that she shall not easily accomplish. Return to the palace and say to the Tsar: Beyond thrice nine kingdoms, in the thirtieth kingdom, there lies an island, and on the island a goat with golden wings eats honey and drinks from rivers of milk, and no man hath beheld him. Let the Tsar have an ancient hulk prepared, that hath mouldered on the sands for thirty years, and let him assemble half a hundred sailors, knaves and wastrels and mighty drinkers. And let him make Yuri the archer captain over the ship and the sailors, and send him to fetch the goat with the golden wings. To reach the island, he must sail neither a little time nor a long time, but three years. Now the ship will sail



for a week or for a month, but in the end, sailors and archer will rot under water many fathoms deep."

And the chief councillor rejoiced in the words of Baba Yaga and gave her gold, and to Svinka the pig a collar of scarlet. And he hastened back to the Tsar, who frowned upon his throne, and he said: "This and this is befallen, and I have found a certain way to rid thee of the archer."

And the Tsar ordered the commander of his fleet to take an ancient vessel that had mouldered on the sands for thirty years, and provision it for six years, and man it with

half a hundred sailors, knaves and wastrels and mighty drinkers. And he sent his couriers to the inns and taverns, and they collected such a rabble as made all smile who looked upon them. For one gazed on the world through a single eye; and the nose of another was twisted, so that its upper half looked toward the east and its lower half toward the west; and a third was of such monstrous girth that he rolled from side to side as a ship when the waves are high, and the earth trembled beneath his tread.

And when the vessel was in readiness, the Tsar summoned the archer, and said: "Thou art my bravest Bowman and the flower of my regiment, wherefore I would have thee serve me a service. Beyond thrice nine kingdoms, in the thirtieth kingdom, there lies an island and on the island there roams a goat with golden wings, who eats honey and drinks from rivers of milk and no man hath beheld him. Yuri the archer, bring me alive the goat with golden wings!"

And the archer stood confounded, but had no word to say.

And the Tsar thundered: "Think, if it please thee, or think not, but if thou serve

me not this service, my sword shall strike thy head from thy white shoulders."

And Yuri bowed before the Tsar and left the palace. And in the evening he returned to his home, but spake no word to his wife.

And she said: "Why art thou heavy? What sorrow clouds thy brow?" And he told her what had befallen.

"Nay, my beloved, dost thou lose heart over this, which is no task but the veriest triflē? Pray the Lord, and lie down to sleep. The morning brings wisdom which the evening withholds."

And the archer slept, and his wife stood on the balcony and opened her book of magic. And straightway there appeared before her two goodly youths, who bowed to the ground and said: "What is thy need? What wouldst thou have us do?"

"I would have you journey across thrice nine kingdoms to the thirtieth kingdom and bring me alive the goat with golden wings."

And they said: "Before the dawn he shall be here." And with the speed of the wind they journeyed thither and with the speed of the wind returned, bearing the goat with golden wings, then vanished as though they had never been.



And the archer's wife awakened him, and said: "Behold, the goat with golden wings walks in thy garden. Carry him to the ship and sail forward for five days, and on the sixth day turn thy course and sail toward home."

And he placed the goat within a chest of cedar and carried him on board.

And the sailors asked: "What lies within the chest?"

And the archer answered: "All manner of stores and provisions, for the way is long, and he who provides for the storm may mock at its fury."

And now the hour was come to sail away.
And trumpets blared, and the white sails
were spread, and a great throng gathered in
the harbor, and the Tsar came down through
their midst to take leave of Yuri the archer.

And the ancient ship sailed over the blue
sea for four days, and on the fifth day the
land had been left far behind. And now the
archer commanded that a cask of wine of
the size of forty hogsheads be rolled on deck,
and he cried to the sailors: "Drink, brothers!
Stint nothing! Your souls be the measure!"

And they did his bidding, and drank until
their eyes drooped and their limbs grew
heavy and their heads hung low between
their shoulders, and they lay down beside the
cask and slept. And the archer took the
helm and steered the ship toward home.

And each morning ere the sailors could
stir their sluggish limbs, a great cask was
rolled on deck, and the archer cried: "Re-
gale you, my children! The journey is long,
and wine brings comfort to the weary spirit."

And for ten days they sailed, five forward
and five back, and on the eleventh day the
ship reached port, its banner streaming in
the wind, its guns firing salutes.

And the Tsar heard a mighty clamor and



And on the eleventh day the ship reached port, its banners streaming in the wind, its guns firing salutes.

hastened to the harbor, and found all his people assembled there with shouts and merrymaking. And when he saw the archer his wrath was kindled against him.

“And dost thou dare, thou faithless knave, to show thyself before the appointed time?”

And the archer answered: “Majesty, thou art the Tsar, and I have kept faith with thee. A fool might sail the seas for seven years, and nothing come of his folly. But we have sailed for eleven days, and that which thou wast pleased to command us, that have we performed. Behold, Majesty, the goat with golden wings!” And he opened the chest of cedar, and the goat walked forth and his golden wings gleamed under the sun.

And seeing this, the Tsar could not choose but suffer Yuri to return to his wife. And for six years the sailors were granted liberty, and for that space none ventured to press them into service.

And the Tsar, black with wrath, ordered his councillor to come before him. And he cried: “Am I the Tsar or am I a fool to be mocked with empty words? Go thou forth from the palace, and until thou hast contrived a bitter end for Yuri the archer, come not into my presence.”

And the councillor went forth, disquieted in spirit, and he passed through crowded cities and he passed over dreary wastes, and out came the Baba Yaga, mounted upon Svinka the pig, and greeted him.

And he said: "What counsel hast thou for me now, Babushka? The archer hath returned and brought with him the goat with golden wings."

"Yet is the archer a simple man, whom to outwit is no more than to sniff a pinch of snuff. But his wife is full of guile. Still we will set her a task that she will not readily accomplish. Go to the Tsar and say: Send Yuri the archer no one knows whither, to bring back no one knows what. It is a task whereat he may labor for century upon century, and be no wiser in the end than in the beginning. And he will return with empty hands, or he will return no more."

And the chief councillor gave her gold, and to Svinka the pig a harness of scarlet, hung all about with silver bells. And he hastened back to the Tsar, who hearkened to his tale and commanded that Yuri the archer be brought before him.

And he said: "Thou art my bravest Bowman and the flower of my regiment, and

thou hast won for me the goat with golden wings. Therefore would I have thee serve me a service. Go thither, no one knows where, and fetch me that, no one knows what. And if thou serve me not this service, my sword shall strike thy head from thy white shoulders."

And the archer went home, weary and sick at heart. And his wife said to him: "Why art thou sorrowful, my dear one? What grief torments thee?"

And he answered: "One grief passes, and another comes, for the Tsar hath ordered me to go thither, no one knows where and fetch him that, no one knows what. It is a task whereat I may labor for century upon century, and be no wiser in the end than in the beginning. And through thy exceeding beauty has this bitter draught been measured out to us."

"This is indeed a mighty service. Nine years must thou journey to reach there and nine to return, and whether aught will avail in the end only God the Father can tell. Yet pray to the Lord and lay thee down to sleep. The morning is wiser than the night."

And the archer slept, and his wife stood on the balcony and opened her book of magic.

And straightway there appeared before her two goodly youths, who bowed to the ground and said: "What dost thou lack? What is thy will of us?"

And she asked them: "Can ye go thither, no one knows where?" And they answered: "Nay," and vanished as though they had never been.

And in the morning she awoke her husband and said: "Go to the Tsar and ask him for gold for thy journey."

And the archer went to the Tsar who gave him a bag of gold, and returned to bid farewell to his wife.

And she said: "Take thou this ball of crystal and at the city gates, throw it before thee, and follow whithersoever it may lead. And may God guide thy footsteps."

And he bade her farewell, and bowing to the four corners of the earth, he left the city. And at the city gates he threw the ball before him and followed whither it led.

And a week passed and a second and a third. And a month passed and a second and a third. And the Tsar summoned his chief councillor and said: "The archer hath gone to roam through the white world for eighteen years. He will never return alive,

for he is laden with gold, for whose sake highwaymen will rob him and mete him out a cruel death. Or he will be devoured by wild beasts, or he will perish from hunger and bitter cold. Therefore take thou my coach of state, and bring me hither the archer's wife."

And the chief councillor did his bidding, and came before the archer's wife. And he said: "Good Morrow to thee, subtle one! I bear the greeting of the Tsar, and his command that thou attend him in the palace."

And when she came to the palace, the Tsar took her by the hand and led her through his lofty chambers whose ceilings were of marble, its floors of onyx and its walls hung all with silken tapestries of many colors, and at length they came to the golden throne that stood alone at the end of a great room. And the Tsar said: "I will wed thee and thou shalt be my Tsaritza."

And she answered: "Majesty, thou art the Tsar, and who am I to gainsay thee? But where hath it been seen or heard that a wife be taken from her husband who lives, and wed with another? True, he is but a lowly archer, and yet my husband in the sight of God."

And the Tsar's brow darkened and he cried: "I have spoken thee fair, and thou hast set me at naught. But if thou come not of thine own will, I will have thee by force."

And a secret smile crossed the face of the archer's wife, and lightly she struck the earth and turned into a turtle-dove and flew through the window.

And the archer traversed many kingdoms and beheld many strange sights, and the ball rolled ever before him. And when he came to a river, it grew long and longer, until it was a shining crystal bridge over which he passed dryshod. And when he was weary, it grew wide and wider until it was a couch of swansdown whereon he laid his heavy limbs. And be the journey little or long, the goal distant or near, he came at length within sight of a desolate mountain, and in the side of the mountain was a portal, and the crystal ball rolled to the portal and disappeared.

And Yuri knew that he had reached his journey's end, and he passed through the portal and entered into a cave in the mountainside, but the darkness was so black that it pierced his eyes, and he knew not which way to turn. And he fell groping to his knees,

and found at length a corner wherein he hid himself, and scarcely had he done so when the portal opened and two ancient men appeared.

And they cried: "Ho! Shmat-Razum! spread the feast!"

And lo! in a moment the darkness vanished, and sconces grew on the walls and candles lighted themselves, and a table appeared, decked with savory meats and rare wines, and dulcimers played soft music. And the old men ate and drank and made merry, and when they had had their fill, they cried: "Ho! Shmat-Razum! remove the feast!" And ere the archer could draw a breath, the music stopped, the table vanished with its platters and flagons, the candle-flames died, the sconces removed themselves, and all was in darkness as before.

And the graybeards cried: "Ho! Shmat-Razum! Guard well the cave till our return," and they went away.

And hardly had they vanished when the archer cried: "Ho! Shmat-Razum! spread the feast!" And in a trice, a feast, more bountiful still than that which went before, gladdened his eyes.

And the archer cried: "Excellent Shmat-

Razum, come thou and dine with me. A feast shared is a joy doubled."

And a voice replied: "What angel of the Lord hath sent thee hither? For thirty years have I served these ancient churls, yet never have they bidden me eat with them."

And the archer looked about him and up and down and, seeing nothing, marvelled. Yet at the end of the table, platters of food were emptied, red wine was poured from flagon into goblet and disappeared, and by this token he knew that the servant Shmat-Razum shared his feast with him.

And when they had eaten and drunk, the archer said: "Hear me, Shmat-Razum! Thou hast languished long in the cave. Wilt thou journey forth with me? I will give thee easier service."

"Why not, master? I am weary of the mountain, and thou art a kindly youth."

"Then remove the feast and let us begone."

And the archer went forth from the cave in the mountainside and looked behind him. But he saw no one.

"Art thou there, Shmat-Razum?"

"Master, I am here. Never doubt me. I shall not leave thee."

And the archer said: "It is well," and



turned his face toward home. And he walked and his legs were swift and his eyes sparkled. And he walked and his legs were heavy and his eyes dull. And he dragged one foot behind the other, and his white hands drooped at his sides.

And he said: "Alas, Shmat-Razum, didst thou but know how my very marrow aches! Another step and my legs will drop from their sockets."

"Nay, my dear master, why didst thou not speak long since? My arms are strong and can bear thee whither thou wilt."

And the archer felt himself seized as if by

a whirlwind, and borne so swiftly through the air that his cap was blown from his head.

And he cried: "Stay, Shmat-Razum! I have lost my cap!"

"Then thy cap is lost, dear master, for we have left it five thousand *vyorst* behind."

And cities and villages flashed by and mountains and shining rivers and dark forests, until they came at length to the blue sea.

And Shmat-Razum said: "Here, master, so it be thy will, I can build thee in the midst of the waves a summer-house of gold, therein to take thine ease and await such fortune as may come to thee."

And the archer said: "So be it!" And they went down to the sea, and where a moment since only the waves had broken, an island lay; and a summer-house of gold rose in its midst with many windows looking on the sea.

And Shmat-Razum said to the archer: "Enter and rest! And after, scan the horizon and from afar thou wilt see three gallions bearing down upon thee. Their masters will disembark, and thou must bid them welcome and order me to spread a feast for them. When they will seek to buy me with all the gold their vessels carry, do thou



*And there by the blue water rose a palace
of gleaming marble, and it was twice
as beautiful as the palace of the Tsar.*

refuse to yield me up, save in exchange for the three wonder-working treasures whereof thou wilt have need. Possess thyself of these, then let them take me, for in due time I shall return to thee."

And the archer slept and arose refreshed, and from the window that faced the rising sun, he saw three galleons come sailing toward him.

And the three masters of the galleons, seeing the island and the summer-house that rose upon it, cried: "What miracle is this? Twice every year for thirty years have we sailed across the sea, and there has been naught in this place but sky and water. And now, behold! an island and a summer-house of gold! Let us go nearer, brothers, that we may take joy of this marvel!"

And they approached the island and cast anchor, and the sailors lowered a boat into the water and the three merchants rowed ashore. And Yuri stood on the steps of the summer-house.

And the merchants said: "Health to thee, friend."

"Health to you, travelers from afar. I bid you welcome. Enter, and refresh body and spirit."



And they entered and the archer cried:
“Ho! Shmat-Razum! Spread the feast!”
And there stood the table, loaded with such
rare viands and precious wines as in all
their wanderings they had neither tasted nor
dreamed about. And they ate and drank
and gazed at one another in amazement.

And when the feast was removed, they said
to the archer: “Thou hast indeed a matchless
servant in Shmat-Razum, and we are minded
to buy him from thee. And in return we will
give thee all the gold that our ships carry
from the markets of the East.”

And the archer answered: “All the gold



they carry and all they left behind will not buy Shmat-Razum from me."

And the merchants advised with one another and spoke again: "Though thou hast in Shmat-Razum a treasure whose like cannot be found in the white world, we have not one, but three marvels to equal him. Wilt thou barter him for one of these?"

"What are these marvels whereof ye boast?"

And the first merchant took from his pouch an ivory casket and opened it. And over all the island there spread a garden, blooming with gaily-colored flowers and

fragrant with their odor and sweet with the song of birds. And he closed the box and the garden disappeared.

And the second merchant drew from his pouch an axe of copper. And he struck it against the wall—tap-tlap—and lo! there was a ship. And he struck it again—tap-tlap—and there was another. A hundred times he struck it and on the blue sea rode a hundred ships, and sailors climbed the masts and guns fired salutes and the commander bowed before the merchant and awaited his orders. But the merchant returned the axe to his pouch, and ships and sailors and commander vanished like a cloud.

And now the third merchant drew from his pouch a golden trumpet, and blew thereon a golden note, and a regiment of soldiers stood before him. And he blew a second note and there was a second regiment. Fifty times he blew and an army of fifty regiments, horse and foot, was drawn up ready for battle. And plumes waved and drums were beaten and couriers hastened to and fro, and the general bowed before the merchant and awaited his orders. But the merchant blew into the other end of the trumpet and

where horses and riders and general had stood, now there stood nothing.

And the archer said: "Wondrous indeed are your treasures, and greatly to be desired. But fleets and armies are the Tsar's business and what have I, a simple soldier, to do with these things? Yet, if ye will, give me all three, and take my servant for yourselves."

"Nay, it is too much. His worth is not so great."

"So be it then. But except ye give me all three treasures, I will not yield him up."

Whereupon the three merchants took counsel together, saying: "Of what use to us are gardens and armies and ships? With Shmat-Razum to serve us, we may live in luxury all the days of our life, and be delivered alike from the perils and the pains of our calling. It is a good exchange."

And they gave the archer their treasures and cried: "Ho! Shmat-Razum! wilt thou go with us?"

And he answered: "Why not? 'Tis all one to me what master I serve."

And the merchants boarded their ships, and ordered Shmat-Razum to spread a feast for them and all their crew. And so he did,

and for three days and nights they revelled, and on the third night there was not one among them that could lift his head from the table or the deck or his comrade's shoulder where it had chanced to fall, so heavy with wine were they.

And Yuri sat alone in his summer-house of gold, and sighed: "Where dost thou linger, Shmat-Razum, my peerless servant?"

And the voice of Shmat-Razum sounded in his ear: "Master, I am here."

And the archer rejoiced and said: "Let us fare farther."

And scarcely had the words left his lips when he was again seized as if by a whirlwind and borne swiftly through the air.

And behind them the island and the summer-house vanished, and the merchants awoke and called: "Ho! Shmat-Razum! A plague on thee and all thy works! Fetch hither a cooling draught that we may ease our burning foreheads and our parched throats!" But though they called from dawn to dusk, nothing answered and nothing came, nay, not so much as the worth of a copper coin.

And at length they looked to where the island had risen from among the waves and

saw that island and summer-house were no longer there. And they cried: "Alack, brothers! We have been outdone by a rogue, over whom the devil himself could not prevail." And they lamented for a space, then spread their sails and sailed away across the blue sea-ocean.

And as for the archer, he came presently within sight of his own tsardom and bade Shmat-Razum set him down on a deserted coast beside the sea.

And he said: "Canst thou build me here a royal palace, Shmat-Razum?"

"Why not? It is the labor of a moment." And there by the blue water rose a palace of gleaming marble, and it was twice as beautiful as the palace of the Tsar. And Yuri opened his ivory casket and a garden spread itself about the palace, blooming with gaily-colored flowers and fragrant with their odors and sweet with the song of birds.

And now the archer sat by his open window and looked out upon his garden, and through the window a snowy turtle-dove came flying. And she fell to the floor and in her place stood the archer's beautiful wife. And rejoicing, each kissed and embraced the other, and Yuri recounted to his wife all the

perils through which he had passed on his wanderings.

And she answered: "Since thy going, a turtle-dove hath flown through field and forest and watched the blue sea for a sign of thy return."

And on the morrow, the Tsar looked from his balcony and saw a marble palace, and it was twice as beautiful as the palace of the Tsar.

And he roared: "What arrogant slave is this, that builds his house upon the Tsar's domain? Let him be brought before me!"

And the fleetest of his couriers ran to the marble palace, and hastened more swiftly back. And he flung himself before the throne and cried: "Dread Majesty, thine archer Yuri hath returned and dwells with his wife in the palace by the sea."

And the Tsar fell into so great a rage that all who heard him trembled. And he commanded his army to march down to the shore, and lay waste the garden and tear down the palace and cruelly slay the archer and his beautiful wife.

And the archer looked from his window and saw the Tsar's army marching on his palace. And he struck his magic axe against

the wall—tap-tlap, tap-tlap. A hundred times he struck it and a hundred ships rode the waves; but their commander stood at his right hand and awaited his orders. And he blew upon his magic trumpet a hundred blasts, and a hundred regiments, horse and foot, fell into line before the palace steps; but their general stood at his left hand and awaited his orders.

And the archer gave the signal for battle. And trumpets blared and drums beat, and steeds pawed the earth and swords flashed in the sun. And the foot-soldiers fell upon the army of the Tsar and the horsemen followed in close pursuit. And they killed many, and all that escaped the sword were taken prisoner. And the ships opened fire upon the Tsar's city.

And when the Tsar beheld his soldiers fleeing from the enemy, he mounted his coal-black charger and, drawing his shining sword from its scabbard, he rode into battle. And the archer, mounted on a milk-white steed, met him in the open field, and they fought valiantly, and the Tsar was overthrown and killed.

Then the Tsar's councillors and generals came to Yuri the archer and said: "Thou

hast overthrown our Tsar. Rule thou the tsardom in his stead."

So Yuri the archer was Tsar over all the realm and his beautiful wife was Tsaritza, and Shmat-Razum, their servant, served them faithfully and well and ate and drank at their table.



THE SLEEPING TSAREVNA
AND THE SEVEN GIANTS



THE SLEEPING TSAREVNA AND THE SEVEN GIANTS

THE Tsar bade his Tsaritsa farewell and rode away to the wars, and she sat alone by the window to wait for his return. Through the white dawn she sat and through the golden noon, till black night fell and her eyes grew dim. Day after day she watched for her belovèd, and the snow came down over field and forest and all the world was white.

And the weeks passed and the months, and on the eve of the Christ-child's birth she bore a daughter. And he came in the morning for whom her heart had yearned, but alas! too great had been her sorrow and too great her joy. She looked and sighed, and as the chimes rang out the birth of the son of God, her spirit left her body.

And the Tsar's woe was deep and bitter. Yet where hath it been seen or heard that a Tsar should live without a Tsaritza? A year passed like an empty dream, and he took unto himself another wife.

Slender she was as a young birch tree and beautiful as a sheaf of wheat that the sun shines on, and she bore herself graciously as a tsaritza should. Yet was she accurst withal, proud and envious and swift to anger, and her heart knew naught but malice and her tongue wickedness. And for her dowry she brought with her a silver mirror, like unto other mirrors save that it was endowed with the gift of speech. And all her joy was to hold converse with it, to smile into its depths, and say: "Little mirror that I treasure, thou that knowest naught but truth, tell me who in all the world is fairest to men's

eyes, whose lips are reddest, whose brow is whitest."

And the mirror answered: "Thou, gracious Tsaritza, there is none to gainsay it; thou in all the world art fairest to men's eyes, thy lips are reddest, thy brow is whitest."

And the evil Tsaritza laughed with joy in her beauty, turning her head now this way and now that, and increased from day to day in disdainfulness and pride.

And in the palace of the Tsar his daughter grew like a flower, and each winter's snow that fell and vanished left her fairer than the last. And for the sake of her beauty and the gentleness of her bearing she was beloved by all who looked on her.

And one day there rode into the palace court a courier from a distant land who sought audience of the Tsar, saying: "I bear greetings from the Tsarevitch Alexei, and his suit for the hand of thy daughter in marriage."

And the Tsar looked with favor upon the suit of Alexei, and pledged him the hand of his daughter in marriage, and with her a dowry of seven rich merchant cities and a hundred royal palaces. And he commanded

that a feast be prepared to celebrate the betrothal of the little Tsarevna, and bade thereto all his subjects, high and low, that they might rejoice in the joy of their Tsar.

And when the feast was in readiness, the evil Tsaritza decked herself in cloth of gold and, smiling into the silver mirror as was her wont, she said: "Little mirror that I treasure, thou that knowest naught but truth, tell me who in all the world is fairest to men's eyes, whose lips are reddest, whose brow is whitest."

And the mirror answered: "Thou, gracious Tsaritza, art passing fair to men's eyes, there is none to gainsay it. Yet she who is betrothed to Alexei is fairer than thou, her lips are redder, her brow is whiter."

And her beautiful eyes blazed with wrath, and she stamped with her foot on the marble floor and with her hand struck the mirror a cruel blow, and cried:

"Thou lying glass, what sorry jest is this! How can she dare to match herself with me? Whiter, forsooth! Yea, for from dawn to dusk her lady mother sat with meek hands upon her meeker breast and gazed on the white snow. But fairer! Nay, how can this be? Too often hast thou told me that all



*"Little mirror that I treasure, thou that
knowest naught but truth, tell me
who in all the world is fairest to
men's eyes."*

the tsardoms of the earth hold not my peer.
Say if this be not truth."

And still the mirror answered: "The beloved of Alexei is fairer than thou; her lips are redder, her brow is whiter."

Then the Tsaritsa, consumed with evil passions, flung the mirror into the farthest-corner of the room and, summoning Chernavka, her waiting-woman, bade her take the little Tsarevna to the depths of the forest and bind her fast to a tall pine tree, that the wolves might devour her.

Satan himself is silent when an angry woman rages, and Chernavka could not choose but bow before the will of her mistress. And she led the little Tsarevna into the depths of the forest, and as they went farther and still farther the little Tsarevna was oppressed with fear and besought Chernavka, saying: "Good Chernavka, how have I sinned against thee? Destroy me not, I pray thee, and when I am Tsaritsa, I will repay thy kindness."

"I dare not take thee back, for she will slay thee. And yet I will not bind thee. Nay, little pigeon, weep no longer, but seek shelter where thou canst and the Lord keep thee from harm."

And when she returned to the palace, the Tsaritza cried: "How fares she now, this beautiful Tsarevna, with her red lips and her white brow?"

And Chernavka answered: "I have bound her arms to a tall pine tree, and left her there in the forest. I have bound her fast, lest she struggle beneath the fangs of the wild beasts. Thus will death take her more easily."

And now it was whispered in the feasting halls that the little Tsarevna had perished, and all the guests lifted their voices in lamentation, and the Tsar withdrew from among them and mourned for his lost daughter. But as for Alexei, he mounted his steed and went forth in search of his bride.

Meanwhile, through the long night, she wandered in the forest and none came nigh her to do her hurt. For if any wild beast approached her, she laid her hand upon him and spake soft words to him, and he departed and did her no injury. And when the dawn broke, she heard the baying of a dog and soon she came within sight of a house in the forest at whose door the dog stood guard. And when he saw her he ran to her and leaped about her as though to bid her welcome.

And the little Tsarevna entered the house,

and there was a room with oaken benches and an oaken table and in the corner a stove of shining tiles. And she knew it for the abode of those in whose hearts dwelt the peace of God, and for her appointed resting-place.

Whereupon she swept and garnished the room, and laid a fire in the stove, and lit a taper before the icon of the Lord and went into the bedchamber and slept.

And the hours passed, and when the first star shone in the blue sky, the beat of hoofs broke the stillness of the forest, and presently seven giants burst into the room, red with the heat of the chase; and the mouth of each was adorned with sweeping moustachios.

And the eldest cried: "Here is a wonder! A house swept and garnished, a fire laid, a taper lit and a welcome to gladden our homecoming. Reveal thyself, whoe'er thou art, that we may know thee for our friend. Art thou a graybeard, thou shalt be our honored sire; art thou a youth, our brother in arms and love; or an ancient dame, we will call thee mother and thou shalt keep our house; and if so be thou art a maid, we will cherish thee as a dear sister."

And the little Tsarevna came out to them, all rosy with confusion, and bowed to the

ground and begged forgiveness of them that she had entered their house unbidden. And by this token did they know her for a Tsar's daughter, and they placed her at the head of their table and set before her a goblet of red wine and a *pirushók*. And she sipped of the wine and broke the *pirushók* and ate. But weariness overwhelmed her and her head sank on her breast, and the eldest brother bore her into a sunny chamber and laid her upon the bed and left her in tranquil slumber.

And so the little Tsarevna dwelt in the forest with the seven giants. And the days followed one another in their course and she knew neither loneliness nor sorrow, for her hands were busied with their tasks, and her heart was glad for that she had been delivered from the hatred of the evil Tsaritza.

And each morning before the dawn, the brothers in a friendly company mounted their steeds and rode away over mountain and valley to kill the wild gray duck, that their right arms might be strengthened; or to meet the Caucasian in open combat and drive him from the land; or to strike from his white shoulders the savage head of the Tartar; and many other valiant deeds did they

perform. And the little Tsarevna bided at home to keep their house and lay their fire, to brew and to bake and to greet their return at nightfall. And all her ways were pleasant ways and no word of strife was heard beneath their roof, and the days followed peacefully one upon the other. And the dog Sakolka was her bodyguard.

And so it came to pass that the seven brothers loved the little Tsarevna with a mighty love and, taking counsel of one another, one morning before the hunt they entered her chamber and the eldest spake, saying: "Maiden, thou art our belovèd sister and so have we cherished thee. Yet is our love grown so strong, that we come before thee now as humble suitors for thy hand in marriage. Wed with us all thou canst not, since we are seven and thou but one. Therefore, we pray thee, make peace among us. Choose one of our number for thy husband and to the rest be a dear sister still. Why dost thou shake thy head? Dost thou love none of us, or is this merchandise too precious for the merchant?"

"Alack, dear brothers, may I be stricken now before your sight if I speak aught but truth to you! I love you well, brave warriors

and true knights, dear to me all alike. And yet I cannot wed with you, for I am promised to Alexei. He is my bridegroom and him do I love beyond all other men."

And the brothers, hearing this, were silent and each one scratched his head with his hand and found no word to say. And at length the eldest spake: "It is no sin to ask. Yet if it be we have given thee cause for anger, grant us forgiveness, we pray thee, and we will speak no more of these things."

"Nay, ye have given me no cause for anger, and for that I may not wed with you, grant me your forgiveness, my brothers, I pray, for I am not to blame."

And the seven brothers bowed low to the little Tsarevna and went forth to the hunt, and they spake no more of these things but dwelt together in peace.

And in the palace the evil Tsaritza brooded apart and cherished her wrath against the Tsar's dead daughter, and for many days the little mirror lay in the farthest-corner of the room. But in the end, so eager was she to look upon her beauty, that she put by her anger and took up the mirror and smiled into its depths, and said:

"Good Morrow to thee, little mirror, thou

that knowest naught but truth. Tell me who in all the world is fairest to men's eyes, whose lips are reddest, whose brow is whitest."

And the mirror answered: "Thou, gracious Tsaritza, art passing fair to men's eyes, there is none to gainsay it. But deep in the green forest, hidden from the ways of men, a maiden dwells with the seven giants, fairer a hundredfold than thou, whose lips are red as a drop of blood, whose brow is white as new-fallen snow."

And now the Tsaritza grew pale with rage, and summoning the girl Chernavka to her presence, cried: "Be thou accurst for thy false dealing, daughter of lies! Where hast thou hid the maid?"

And Chernavka fell weeping to her knees, and answered: "In truth I have not hid her, Majesty. I did but leave her to wander in the forest, seeking what shelter she might find."

"She dwells now in the house of the seven giants. Seek her out there and slay her! And if thou spare her life a second time, thine own I will not spare!"

And so it came to pass that, as the little Tsarevna sat spinning at the window, awaiting the return of her brothers from the

chase, she heard the angry barking of the dog Sakolka and, raising her head, beheld an aged beggar who with her staff strove to drive the dog from her.

And the little Tsarevna cried: "Stay, babushka! Stay but a little! And I will come to thee and drive Sakolka off and bring thee alms."

"Hasten, sweet child! The dog would have my life."

But when the little Tsarevna, a snowy loaf in her hand, would have crossed the threshold, Sakolka barred the way, and would not suffer her to pass. And when the aged woman would have approached, he bared his fangs and sprang at her like some wild beast of the forest. And she fled in haste away.

And the little Tsarevna called after her: "It may be that he slept ill in the night, and is weary. Therefore will I fling thee the loaf. Hold thou thine arms to receive it."

And she flung the loaf to the aged dame who received it in her arms, and cried: "A blessing on thy pretty head! Take this in return!" And she threw her a golden apple.

And the dog Sakolka growled and leaped high in the air to catch the apple, but it fell

into the hands of the little Tsarevna. And seeing this, the old dame cried: "For the bread thou hast given me God will reward thee. And for the apple, eat it when thou hast naught better to do. And so farewell!"

And the little Tsarevna returned into the room, and the dog Sakolka ran by her side, and with his forefoot beat on her white hand as who should say: "Fling the apple from thee!"

But she struck him lightly, crying: "What, Sakolka! What, thou foolish one! Forget thine evil dream and be at peace!"

And he lifted his head and howled as though his soul were oppressed with a secret pain.

And the maiden returned to her spinning, but the apple she placed in the window that she might rejoice in its beauty. For it was an apple whose like she had never beheld, so tender and fragrant, so bursting with sweetness, blushing like a maiden before her lover and golden as a goblet brimmed with honey, and so crystal clear that she could see the little black seeds at its heart.

And she would have awaited the return of her brothers that they too might rejoice in its beauty but, gazing at it ever and again, at

length she took it into her white hand and raised it to her lips, and with her little teeth bit through the golden skin and swallowed the veriest morsel. And straightway she swayed as a reed in the wind, and fell upon the bench, and her white hands drooped at her sides and the golden apple rolled away to a far corner of the room. And the dog Sakolka lay beside her, and placed his head between his forefeet.

And presently the beat of hoofs broke the stillness of the forest and the seven giants rode joyfully homeward, having put to rout vast hordes of their enemy with slaughter and bloodshed. But there was none at the threshold to welcome their homecoming, and within no fire was laid, no taper lit.

“This bodes no good,” said the brothers. “Yet if sorrow be upon us, we must abide her coming.”

And they found the little Tsarevna upon the oaken bench, and the dog Sakolka lay at her feet. But when he saw them, he ran to and fro and barked madly and would not be quieted. And presently he spied the golden apple, where it had rolled into a far corner of the room, and swallowed it at a gulp and lay down and died.

And the seven giants knelt by the bench of the little Tsarevna and prayed for the peace of her white soul, and their hearts were sick with sorrow. Then they robed her in snowy garments, and made ready to follow her to the grave. Yet were they troubled and sore perplexed, for she lay not as one touched by the hand of Death, but as though she were folded in the wings of a dream, so red were her lips, so fresh her brow. Only the breath of life was not in her.

And so three days passed, and still she slumbered, and in the end the brothers laid her on a crystal bier and, chanting prayers, they bore her on their mighty shoulders to a distant mountain, rising in the midst of an empty plain, where none could find her out. Through a dark portal in the mountainside they passed and into a secret cavern, and there by stout chains between two columns they hung the crystal bier, so that the wind when he passed that way might lull her to sweet rest.

And the eldest brother said: "Sleep softly, thou whose beauty hath invoked some jealous spirit to thy destruction. We have safeguarded thee for the love we bore thee and for the sake of thy bridegroom Alexei.

And now thou shalt be bride to Death alone.
May the skies receive thy soul!" And so
they left her.

And the evil Tsaritza took up her little
mirror and said: "Little mirror that I treas-
ure, thou that knowest naught but truth, tell
me who in all the world is fairest to men's
eyes, whose lips are reddest, whose brow is
whitest."

And the mirror answered: "Thou, graci-
ous Tsaritza, there is none to gainsay it;
thou in all the world art fairest to men's eyes,
thy lips are reddest, thy brow is whitest."

And the evil Tsaritza was content.

And now for many moons Alexei had
journeyed up and down the land in search of
his bride. And still he could learn naught
of her and still he questioned each wayfarer
who crossed his path: "Say, hast thou heard
aught on thy wanderings of the little Tsar-
evna? I am her bridegroom."

But here was a riddle none could solve.
And one would mock at him for a madman,
and one would turn from him and vouchsafe
no answer.

And at length he raised his eyes to where
the sun rode through the noonday sky.

“Sun, sun, thou light and lord of the heavens, thou never-wearying one, joining the icy hand of winter with the warm clasp of spring, thou that canst see the earth and all her creatures, wilt thou deny me comfort? Hast thou seen aught on thy wanderings of the little Tsarevna? I am her bridegroom.”

“Nay, little brother, though the earth and all her creatures lie open to my sight, the little Tsarevna is hidden from me. It may be that she lies buried deep in the bowels of the earth. Or it may be that the moon, my sister, hath seen a trace of her wandering footprints. Ask thou of her.” And the sun went on his way.

But Alexei sat on a stone by the wayside and awaited the night. And when darkness came and the moon rose into the heavens, he besought her with prayer, crying: “Moon, moon, thou golden trumpet in the sky, thou lamp of the great darkness, shining so brightly that all the little stars, enamored of thy radiance, come forth to gaze on thee, wilt thou deny me comfort? Hast thou seen aught on thy wanderings of the little Tsarevna? I am her bridegroom.”

“Nay, little brother, I have not seen her.



My watch spans but a few brief hours of the night, and it may be that she goes her solitary way while I am bound in sleep."

"The sun hath not seen her by day nor the moon by night. Where then shall I seek her, save in the arms of death?"

"Stay! Hast thou asked of the wind that blows through the secret caverns of the earth where no light may enter? It may be he can serve thee! Be of good cheer and so farewell to thee!" And the moon went on her way.

And Alexei took heart and ran to the wind, crying: "Wind, wind, thou mighty



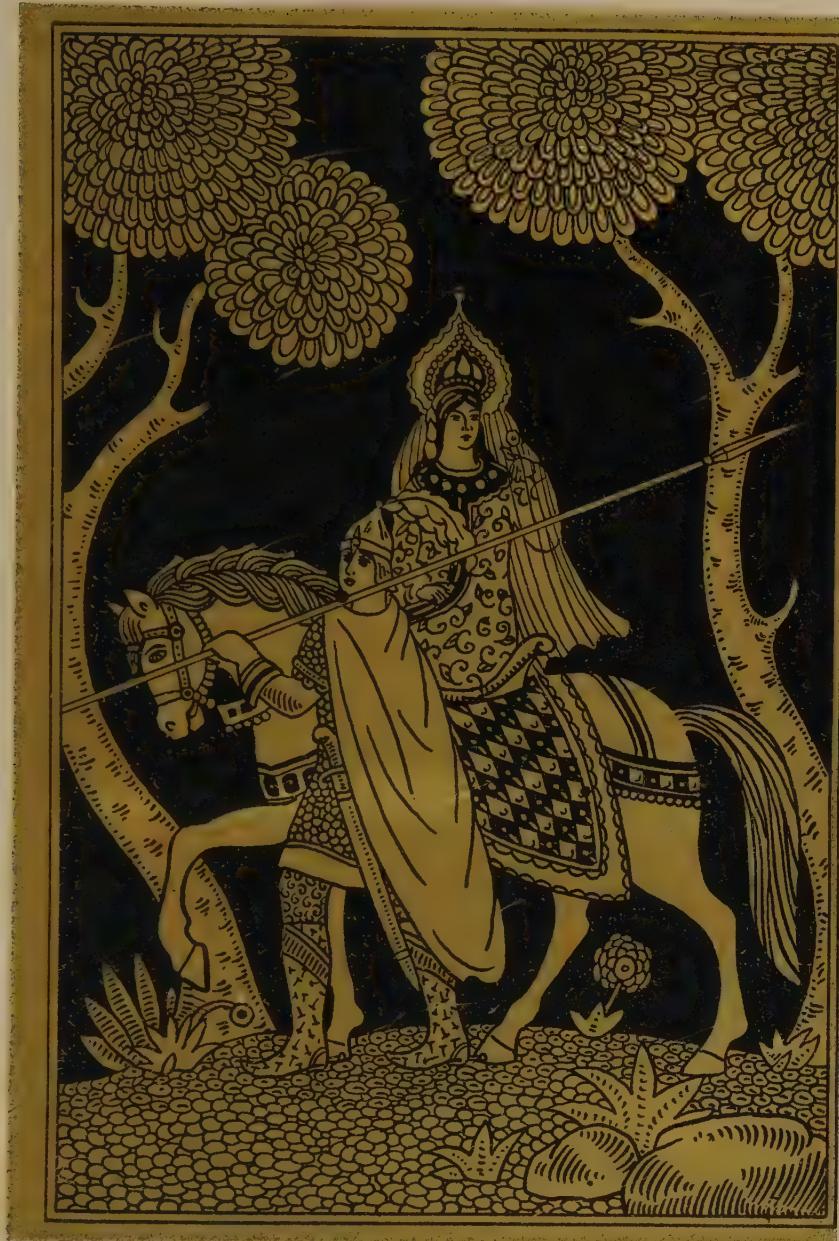
one! Thou that dost shepherd the swift thunderclouds, thou master of the billows of the deep, hurling thyself through the bleak realms of space, subject to God alone, wilt thou deny me comfort? Hast thou seen aught on thy wanderings of the little Tsarevna? I am her bridegroom."

And the mighty wind answered: "Yea, I have seen the little Tsarevna but little of comfort do I bring thee. Beyond a river that flows softly to guard her slumber, a desolate mountain rises, and at its very heart a secret cavern, where none hath entered in save I alone. There, hung by stout chains between

two columns, a crystal bier sways to my lightest touch, and on the bier the little Tsarevna sleeps through the unending night.” And the wind went on his way.

And Alexei wept to hear the grievous tidings that the wind brought him, and when he had done weeping, he turned his steed toward that far country where the little Tsarevna slept. And he journeyed by night and by day until he came within sight of the desolate mountain. And he passed through the dark portal and there, in the unending night, he beheld the crystal bier that swayed between its columns and on the bier the little Tsarevna lay. And at sight of her, lying so still and beautiful, his heart could not support its woe, and he flung himself upon the crystal bier so that it fell to the ground and was shattered into a thousand fragments. And straightway the little Tsarevna awoke and looked about her in amazement, murmuring: “How sound hath been my sleep! How strange my dreams!” But when her eyes fell upon Alexei, she forgot all else and arose from the ground and went to him, crying: “Alexei! My beloved!”

And he who but a moment since had wept



*And so they set forth upon their journey
to the Tsar's palace.*

for sorrow, now wept for joy. And he bore her in his arms out of the somber darkness and into the light of the sun.

And so they set forth upon their journey to the Tsar's palace, and the whisper went before them that the Tsar's daughter had returned to life.

And it chanced that the evil Tsaritza, gazing idly into her mirror, questioned it, saying: "Little mirror that I treasure, thou that knowest naught but truth, tell me who in all the world is fairest to men's eyes, whose lips are reddest, whose brow is whitest."

And the mirror answered: "Thou, gracious Tsaritza, art passing fair to men's eyes, there is none to gainsay it. But she whom Alexei bears hither is fairer a thousandfold than thou, her lips are redder than a drop of blood, her brow is whiter than new-fallen snow."

And the evil Tsaritza dashed the little mirror to the ground where it lay broken into many bits, and ran to the door of her chamber, and there she met the little Tsarevna, borne on the arm of Alexei, and so radiant was her beauty that the heart of the evil Tsaritza grew black with venom, and she fell down and died.

And there was great rejoicing throughout the tsardom and, amid feasting and revelry, the little Tsarevna was wed with her bridegroom Alexei. And the seven giants were bidden to the feast, and danced till the dawn broke and the cock crew.

Since time began
A feast so fair
Was never spread—
I too was there.
But all I drank
Of mead and ale
Ran down my beard—
Thus ends my tale. 5



THE SNAKE-TSAREVNA



THE SNAKE-TSAREVNA

A COSSACK rode one night through the dark forest and lost his way. And he wandered for a day and a night, and a second day and a night, and on the evening of the third day, he reached a clearing where a haystack rose among the trees. And he was fain to rest his weary limbs, so, leaping from his steed, he sat him down beside the haystack and lighted his black pipe.

And for an hour he smoked and took his ease, nor noted that a spark from his black pipe kindled the hay. And being restored to vigor, he mounted his steed and journeyed farther.

But ere he had gone ten paces, a great light burst on the blackness of the forest, and he turned and saw the haystack all aflame, and on its summit a lovely maiden stood, and a ring of fire enclosed her roundabout.

And the maiden stretched forth her white arms and cried: "Good Cossack, save me from a bitter death!"

And the Cossack answered: "How shall I save thee? The fire burns bright, and will devour me ere I can reach thy side."

"Do thou but thrust thy spear into the flames, and I will save myself."

And the Cossack thrust his spear into the flames but turned his head aside, for his flesh could not endure the fire's heat. And in that moment the maiden was transformed into a snake and, slipping through the flames, she glided along the spear until she reached the Cossack, then coiled her body twice about his throat and took her tail between her sharp, white teeth.

And the Cossack grew pale with fear, and



*And on its summit a lovely maiden stood,
and a ring of fire enclosed her round-
about.*

would have plucked her from his throat but that his strength forsook him. And the serpent spoke in a human voice, and said: "Thou hast no need to fear me, comely youth. I will not harm thee. Yet thou must suffer me for seven years and seven days to lie about thy throat, and thou must roam through the four corners of the world in quest of the copper palace, asking thy way of all the winds that blow, the storms of winter and the autumn blasts, the breeze of summer and the breath of spring. And having found the palace, thou shalt know joy thereafter."

So the Cossack went in search of the copper palace, and many days passed by and many waters flowed into the sea, while he roamed through the four corners of the world and asked his way of all the winds that blew.

And at the end of seven years he came to a high mountain, and a palace of red copper gleamed on its crest, and a white wall surrounded the palace on every side.

And the Cossack spurred his steed up the high mountain, and the white wall opened to receive him and closed again, and he found himself within the palace court. And

lo! the snake fell from the Cossack's throat and struck the earth, and was transformed into the lovely maid he had succored from the flames.

And she led his weary steed into the stable, but the Cossack she led into a lofty chamber, whose walls were mirrors and whose marble floor was strewn with tapestries and rich brocades.

And the maiden said: "I am the daughter of a mighty Tsar and a wicked dragon hath enchanted me. For seven long years thou hast served me well, good Cossack, and now remain but seven days of thy service, which thou must spend within these mirrored walls. Thou shalt have food and drink but, if thou love me, I pray thee venture not beyond the threshold, nor seek to read the riddle of aught that thou shalt see. Heed my behest, and when the spell is loosed in seven days, I shall return to thee." And striking the ground, she was transformed into a snake and slipped away.

And the Cossack looked about him and, sighed: "Ech, what a place is this! Mirrors and tapestries and rich brocades, but never a sign of honest food and drink! It is plain

that I will perish here of hunger, ere half of seven days have run their course."

But as he spoke a copper cask appeared and rolled to the right, and a feast lay spread before him such as his eyes had never seen nor his fancy pictured. And he ate heartily and drank his fill, but still the platters were heaped high with food, and the tankards brimmed with ale.

And the Cossack cried at length: "I can eat no more," and the cask rolled to the left, and the table and its burden disappeared. And the Cossack said: "Ech, what a place is this! It is plain that I might live here for thrice seven years, nor come to the end of my feasting."

And for six days he dwelt within the chamber and feasted, and on the seventh day he thought: "To-day I leave the palace with my bride, and through the white world we will ride together. What harm then if I take this copper cask, that we may live in plenty, nor heed the morrow?"

And when the cask appeared and he had feasted, he laid his hand upon it. But the cask rolled from underneath his hand to the chamber door, the Cossack in pursuit. And crossing the threshold, he seized it in his

arms, but at that moment a mighty roaring sounded in his ears, and the mountain rocked, and the palace crashed to the earth, and the Cossack stood beneath the open sky, his whimpering steed beside him and in his arms the magic copper cask. And far above his head a dragon soared, bearing aloft between his fiery wings the snake-Tsarevna.

And now he thought upon the maiden's words and, weeping for his sin, he vowed to search for her through all the tsardoms of the earth and free her from the dragon's evil power.

And mounting his steed, he set forth on his way. And he journeyed near and far, and he journeyed little and long, and met at length with an aged man whose beard was as white as milk. And the old man said: "Long life to thee, Cossack! Wilt thou give me food and drink?"

And the Cossack rolled his cask to the right, and a table appeared that bore three whole roast oxen and three huge vats of beer. And the old man ate the oxen and drank the beer and wiped the foam from his lips, and said: "Another ox would not have come amiss, but the Lord's will be done. My thanks are thine, good Cossack, for bread



*And far above his head a dragon soared,
bearing aloft between his fiery wings
the snake-Tsarevna.*

and salt. Where do thy wanderings lead thee?"

"I go whither mine eyes look in search of the snake-Tsarevna. Dost thou know, grandsire, where she lies hid?"

"Why should I not know, Cossack? I know it well."

"And wilt thou tell it me?"

"Why should I tell it thee? For if thou know where she lies hid, or know it not, what matter, since thou wilt never find her?"

"Yet tell it me, and I will give thee my magic cask, and name thee night and morning in my prayers."

"'Tis a good cask and I will use it well. And for the maid, seek out the Baba Yaga with bony legs, for she is sister to the dragon that stole thy bride away. And every evening, when the moon is high, she journeys in her mortar through the forest to visit her brother's cave. If thou canst follow, thou wilt gain thy quest, and this is all my counsel. Yet take, in return for thy bounty, my sword of might, whereof thy need is greater far than mine. Naught can resist its strength, as thou shalt see."

And he cried: "Cut down the forest, sword!" And the sword leaped from its

sheath, and with a single stroke hewed down great trees, and cleft vast rocks asunder, and in a moment had laid waste the forest as far as the eye could see.

And the old man cried: "Return to the scabbard, sword!" And the sword obeyed.

And the Cossack took the sword, and gave its master his magic cask, and went to seek the Baba Yaga with bony legs.

And as he rode, a brown bear crossed his path, and she was as high as a mountain. And he would have thrust his spear into her heart, but she cried in a human voice: "Spare me, good Cossack, and I will serve thee hereafter."

And the Cossack said: "Why not?" and went his way.

And as he rode, a falcon flew before him, and her outspread wings were as broad as the broad blue sea. And he would have thrust his spear into her heart, but she cried in a human voice: "Spare me, good Cossack, and I will serve thee hereafter."

And the Cossack said: "Why not?" and went his way.

And as he rode, he came to the bank of a stream, and a fish flashed through the waters, and she was as long as a tale that is never

done. And he would have thrust his spear into her heart, but she cried in a human voice: "Spare me, good Cossack, and I will serve thee hereafter."

And the Cossack said: "Why not?" and went his way.

And now the moon rode high in the deep heavens, and the ground trembled at the Cossack's feet, and broke, and the earth heaped itself on either hand. And out of the pit a mortar rose and sailed through the air, bearing the Baba Yaga with bony legs to the dragon's cave.

And the Cossack whispered in his good



steed's ear: "Follow, my heart! Her mortar outstrips the wind, but a Cossack's steed can fly more swiftly still." And the steed followed so hard upon her track that, though she swept it from behind her with her besom, she could not sweep as swiftly as he ran.

But in the end they reached the blue sea-ocean and paused on the sandy shore. And the Baba Yaga mocked at the Cossack's plight as her mortar sailed above the tranquil waves, and she cried: "Let thy steed plunge into the waters, Cossack! It may be he would cool his heated limbs."

And from the sea a fish rose to the surface, and she was as long as a tale that is never done. And she said: "How can I serve thee?"

And the Cossack answered: "I would cross the sea, nor lose the track of yon foul witch with bony legs that travels in her mortar."

And the fish struck the sea with her mighty tail, and a bridge spanned the water whose like the Tsar himself had never seen. For its girders were of silver, its gates of gold, and its floor of shining crystal, so that one trod upon it as on a mirror. And the hoofs of the Cossack's steed rang on the crys-

tal, and so they crossed the sea to the farther shore. And the bridge of wonder vanished.

And the Cossack said: "I thank thee, fish."

And the fish replied: "My duty to thee, Cossack," and swam away.

And again they followed the track of the Baba Yaga, till they came to a barren mountain. And the Baba Yaga mocked at the Cossack's plight as her mortar sailed over the peak, and she cried: "Let thy steed scale the barren mountain, Cossack! It may be he would graze upon its crest."

And a falcon swooped from the sky, and her outspread wings were as broad as the broad blue sea. And she said: "How can I serve thee?"

And the Cossack answered: "I would cross the mountain, nor lose the track of yon vile witch with leathern skin that travels in her mortar."

And the falcon bore the Cossack and his steed across the barren mountain, and set them down upon the farther side.

And the Cossack said: "I thank thee, falcon."

And the falcon answered: "My duty to thee, Cossack," and flew away.

And again they followed the track of the

Baba Yaga, till they came to a forest so dense that a bee might not crawl through its branches. And the Baba Yaga mocked at the Cossack's plight as her mortar sailed above the tree-tops, and she cried: "Let thy steed wander through the forest, Cossack! It may be he would rest beneath its shade."

And the Cossack cried: "Cut down the forest, sword!" And the sword of might leaped from its sheath, and with a single stroke hewed down the forest. But still the Cossack could not journey through, for the fallen trees lay strewn so thick about him that they reached the sky.

And out of the forest a brown bear came forth, and the bear was as high as a mountain. And she said: "How can I serve thee?"

And the Cossack answered: "I would cross the forest, nor lose the track of yon accursed witch, with eyes like coals, that travels in her mortar."

And the brown bear bent to her task, and flung the trees aside, to make a path for the Cossack and his steed. And it was a task that might have wearied the strongest, but the brown bear toiled without rest. And

when she was spent, she drank at the stream that flowed through the wood and returned again to her labor. And in the end, she made a path for the Cossack and his steed.

And the Cossack crossed the forest, and said: "I thank thee, bear."

And the bear replied: "My duty to thee, Cossack, and a word of counsel. Thy foot stands now on the edge of the dragon's realm, but over all who enter he casts the spell of everlasting sleep. If thou canst but outwit him and keep thine eyes from sleep, thou shalt win to the end of thy journey and to the snake-Tsarevna." And the bear ran away.

And when the Cossack entered the dragon's realm, his limbs were stricken with heaviness, and the head of his steed hung lifeless on his breast. But ere the spell had overpowered him, the Cossack drew from his pouch a box of snuff, and filled each nostril, and sneezed so mightily that his eyes flew open, and his steed ran more swiftly than before, and the slumber left him as though a hand had taken it away.

And the Cossack laughed aloud and cried: "Good friend, this is the time to fight,

and not to sleep. And for thy charm, it may serve to frighten babes, but never a Russian Cossack!"

And so he came at length to the dragon's cave, guarded by boulders and the trunks of trees, and knocked upon the portal with his spear, but no answer came. And he cried: "Cut down the barrier, sword!" And the sword cut down the tree-trunks and the boulders, and the Cossack entered in.

And the snake-Tsarevna, in a crown of gold and a jewelled *sarafan*, sat on a stone while the dragon's evil head lay in her lap, and she told him tales of wonder.



But now the dragon raised his head and cried: "What rash fool enters here to brave my fury and meet his death between my hungry jaws?"

"No rash fool, dragon, but a Russian Cossack, whom thou hast deeply wronged."

"Ho, Russian Cossack! I will lay thee upon one paw and crush thee with the other, till naught remains of thee save a fleck of blood."

"Tsars and the sons of tsars tremble before thee—princes and generals bow to thy might—but the Cossack fears thee as little as the hare that runs across his path in the deep forest."

And the dragon raised his head from the maiden's lap, and leaped upon his foe. But the Cossack cried: "Cut down the monster, sword!" And the sword leaped from its sheath and slew the dragon at a single blow.

And the Cossack would have taken his bride into his arms, but she had vanished, and in her stead a snake lay coiled on the rock.

And the Cossack cried: "I have crossed the blue sea and the barren mountain and the wilderness, and I have slain the dragon that held thee captive. What task remains

undone, ere the sin I sinned against thee be atoned?"

And the snake replied: "Until I am bathed in the spring of the water of life, the spell will not be loosed."

"And where shall I seek the spring of the water of life?"

"Ask of the Baba Yaga with bony legs!"

And the Cossack saw the Baba Yaga where she crouched behind a boulder. And he plucked her forth and cried: "If thou wouldest live, lead me straightway to the spring of the water of life."

And she answered: "Master, I will," and led the way. And the snake coiled herself about the Cossack's throat, and took her tail between her sharp, white teeth. And he mounted his steed and followed the Baba Yaga.

And whether the way was long or short, swiftly told is the tale, but the deed is slowly done. Yet they came in the end to a spring in a sunny clearing. And the Baba Yaga cried: "There lies the spring of life," and would have fled, but the Cossack seized the mortar and held it fast.

And he flung a dry branch into the spring,

and the dry branch burned to ashes, and he said to the Baba Yaga: "Now shalt thou die!"

And she answered: "Nay, master, for if I die, how wilt thou find the spring?"

And again she led the way to a sunny clearing, and cried: "There lies the spring of life," and would have fled, but the Cossack held her fast.

And he flung a dry branch into the spring and the dry branch withered to dust, and he said to the Baba Yaga: "Now, surely, thou shalt die a horrid death."

And she answered: "Release me, master, and in all truth I will lead thee to the spring of the water of life."

And he released her, and she led the way to a dark forest where a spring welled between two rocks, and she cried: "There lies the spring of the water of life!"

And the Cossack flung a dry branch into it, and the branch blossomed and bore golden fruit. And the Baba Yaga with bony legs vanished in smoke.

And the Cossack bathed the snake in the water of life, and the scales fell from her body, and she was changed into a beauteous

maid, who laid her hand in his and said: "Thy sin is expiated, Cossack, and thou shalt wed with me."

And so they journeyed to her father's tsardom, where they were greeted with clamor and rejoicing. And the Tsar gave the Cossack a royal palace and many servants, and he lived in ease and plenty all his days.

And so I tell thee the tale as I have heard it—neither too long nor too short, but as long as from thee to me.



HOW THE BOGATÍRS
WERE DESTROYED
IN HOLY RUSSIA

HOW THE BOGATÍRS WERE DESTROYED IN HOLY RUSSIA

THUS did it come to pass.

Seven bogatírs journeyed together across the lonely steppes, and came to an ancient oak that marked the crossing of three ways. And one way led to the North and one to Kiev and one to the blue sea, and the river Safat flowed hard by. And being weary, they dismounted and pitched their tents and laid them down to rest, and their faithful steeds sought pasture in the green fields that lay on either hand.

And when the sun reddened the eastern sky, Ilya Múrometz awoke. And he knelt on the bank of the river Safat and bathed in the clear stream and with a kerchief of fair linen dried his body, then bowed before the blessed icon and looked abroad.

And he beheld beyond the river Safat a horde of Tartars, and they swept like an angry wind across the plain, and so great was their number that a rider might not encircle them nor a gray wolf pass through their midst nor an eagle fly over them.

And Ilya cried: “Bogatírs, awake! The Tartars are upon us!” And they awoke and, springing to the saddle, they charged the enemy. And lustily they laid about them, and hewed and slashed and cut the foemen down with sword and spear, and for each Tartar stricken by the blade of a bogatír another was trampled beneath his horse’s feet. And the battle raged for three hours and three minutes, and in the end the bogatírs prevailed over the enemy and left him slaughtered on the battlefield.

And now, exulting in their prowess, they made vaunt of their deeds and cried: “Whose strength is like our strength? A host of Tartars have we overthrown, so great in number that a rider might not encircle them nor a gray wolf pass through their midst nor an eagle fly over them. Yet our mighty shoulders remain unbowed, our swords unblunted and our faithful steeds eager to plunge afresh into the fray.”

And Alyosha Popóvitch cried: “Dowered with such might are we, that were some unknown power to assail us, we should subdue him by the strength of our right arms.”

And scarcely had he uttered these rash words, when two warriors appeared before

him and they were clad in shining armor and their faces were radiant as the dawn.

And they said: "We come to make trial of your strength. And that ye number seven and we but two, regard it not, but draw your swords and fight."

And the bogatírs knew not their adversaries, but the heart of Alyosha Popóvitch grew hot within him and, drawing his sword, he fell upon the twain that challenged him and smote them. And lo! they were four, clad all in shining armor and alive. And after him Dobrinya Nikítich drew his sword and cleft the four in twain, and now eight warriors rode abreast, clad all in shining armor and alive. And Ilya Múrometz followed after him and, drawing his mighty sword, struck down the unknown power at a blow. And once again their strength was doubled, and all were clad in shining armor and alive.

And now the seven bogatírs together charged the foe. And lustily they laid about them, and hewed and slashed and cut the enemy down with sword and spear, but still the unknown power increased and multiplied, returning blow for blow. And so for three days and three hours and three minutes

the battle raged, and in the end the mighty shoulders of the bogatírs were bowed and their swords were blunted and their steeds were spent. But the enemy, growing from strength to strength, belabored them and knew not weariness.

And terror seized upon the souls of the seven bogatírs, and they fled to the stone mountain and to the shelter of its hidden caves. And Alyosha Popóvitch was the first to reach the mountain, but when he set his foot upon it he was turned to stone. And so with the second. And so with the third. And so with all.

In this wise were the bogatírs destroyed in holy Russia.

THE END



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EXPLANATION OF RUSSIAN WORDS USED IN TEXT

Arshín—A measure of length, 28 inches.

Bogatír—A Russian warrior, of great size, strength and valor, for whom there is no exact English counterpart.

Pirushók—A cake with meat, vegetable, cheese, jam, or fruit filling.

Piroshkí (plural).

Pood—A measure of weight, 36 pounds.

Skazka—An imaginative tale.

Skazki (plural).

Sarafán—A sleeveless robe.

Vyerstá—A measure of length, about two-thirds of a mile.

Vyorst (plural).

Vodka—An alcoholic drink, made of wheat.





